

# The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project Design Report

April 2025



Cairns Regional Council acknowledges and pays our respects to the Traditional Custodians of our region, the Djabugay; Yirrganydji; Buluwai, Gimuy Walubara Yidinji; Mandingalbay Yidinji; Gunggandji; Dulabed and Malanbara Yidinji; Bundabarra and Wadjanbarra Yidinji; Wanyurr Majay; Mamu and NgadjonJii peoples. We extend this respect to all elders past, present and future, and other First Peoples within our region.

Revisions

Issue	Date	Description	Prepared By	Reviewed By
A	14 April 2025	DRAFT REPORT	PILOT PLACES and SMEC	C. STALKER D. HOUSTON-JONES
B	30 April 2025	FINAL REPORT	PILOT PLACES and SMEC	C. STALKER D. HOUSTON-JONES

The Cairns City Centre and inner suburbs (central Cairns) are significantly affected by a range of natural hazards including flood, storm tide inundation and coastal erosion including sea level rise. As the principal centre and primary focal point for employment and business opportunities within the region, it is important to adopt a safe growth approach to development within the city centre to ensure the long term prosperity of the region. Council is working towards maturing its resilience policy framework through integrating natural hazard risk management and climate adaptation processes at the city scale. However, further planning work is required to identify feasible mitigation and adaptation solutions for the city centre and the inner suburbs for future investment and delivery.

SMEC wishes to sincerely thank our Project Team partners who greatly assisted throughout the project with their combined expertise and inputs into the Project deliverables - Pilot Places, Civic Shifts, Bull & Bear Economics, People Oriented Design, WT Partners, Up North. We further wish to thank the many participants and stakeholders through the design phases of the Project, including the Traditional Owners, representatives from key local agencies and institutions, schools, the Community Panel members, Youth Council, community group representatives, members of the public, Council project team and many staff who contributed who contributed and provided guidance throughout Project.

The **Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project** (including Project Road Map) is a non-statutory document that identifies future project opportunities underpinned by guiding principles for the Cairns city centre. These project opportunities have the potential to build upon the many successful public space projects delivered throughout the city centre over recent years and to respond to the community’s aspirations for Cairns. Whilst only opportunities at this stage, the individual projects may progress through further investigation, community and stakeholder engagement, and concept development. Further work, over the longer term, would be subject to a range of factors including but not limited to funding availability, service delivery priorities, investment decisions by private businesses and other levels of government, environmental and other approvals, presentation of new opportunities, and changes in community needs and aspirations. If individual projects progress, the community will be notified separately about consultation opportunities and statutory notification processes.

This project has been funded by the Housing Support Program, Stream 1. by the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.



# The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project

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# Glossary

Term		Definition
Community Ways		Local neighbourhood streets and pathways (not otherwise separately identified as individual recommended projects by the Project) that can be cooled, shaded and gain improved ecologies through community-based projects. Street neighbours, local community, community groups and traditional owners can themselves and in partnership with Council increase shade trees and other vegetation to contribute to the connected green network of shaded, accessible paths for walking and cycling, scooting.
Design Deliverables		Specific design outcomes relating to the achievement of hazard resilience, tropically responsive design, safe community oriented streets and privacy.
Green Ways		Shaded streets, specifically identified, that link key destinations in central Cairns
Design Hub		Multi-day design led engagement blocks during which focussed stakeholder engagement occurred.
Micro-greening		Domestic or business scale opportunities to green sites by add plants to entry areas, street frontages, patios or throughout a site, e.g. pot plants, planter boxes, hanging plants.
Prefabricated Housing Design and Construction		Building construction methods that use off site-manufacturing techniques of component building parts rather than the traditional on-site construction methods.
Natural hazard		Includes flood, storm tide inundation, sea level rise and coastal erosion.
Parklet		Small parks.
Place activation		Identifying and instigating activity and elements of interest in a place to facilitate community visitation, ownership and engagement, community connection, improve safety, bring live, energy and renewal to an area.
Smiths Creek		Includes Fearnley Street drain
Stream Ways		Regenerated 'drains' and creeks, specifically identified that play a vital role in providing green recreation and connection corridors through central Cairns
Super-green		Area with extensive lush tropical vegetation.

# Executive Summary

## An exceptional Regional City

The Cairns region is located on the Traditional Lands of First Nations Peoples, including the Djabugay; Yirrganydji; Buluwai, Gimuy Walubara Yidinji; Mandingalbay Yidinji; Gunggandji; Dulabed and Malanbara Yidinji; Bundabarra and Wadjanbarra Yidinji; Wanyurr Majay; Mamu and NgadjonJii peoples. Once a coastal landscape of mangroves and sand dunes, rich with food and cultural significance for First Nations people, Cairns is now a city of 175,000. Cairns is defined by its spectacular natural surroundings – the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics Rainforest, both World Heritage-listed treasures as well as a strong regional services and visitor economy. Surveys by Cairns Regional Council (CRC) indicate residents of Cairns see the environment as central to their identity, and they want to see it celebrated and protected.

## Drivers of change

Cairns is experiencing strong population growth, with an estimated an additional nearly 70,000 people to be living in Cairns by 2050. To manage this growth, CRC has developed the Towards 2050: Shaping Cairns Growth Strategy, with the vision seeking to position Cairns as ‘the World’s Most Liveable and Enterprising Regional City, built upon the natural setting, existing quality of life and established character of the city.’

CRC has set a clear direction where growth will, in part, be accommodated in central Cairns area, near existing services and facilities. This means more housing in Cairns will be well located, and more people will be able to live close to employment and services. The central Cairns area encompasses the CBD and adjacent city suburbs within approximately 2 kilometres of the CBD.

## The purpose of the Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project

Cairns’ natural setting, thriving landscape, a diverse and engaged community, tourist attractions, and resilient economic base underpinned by growth are chief amongst its natural advantages. However, serious constraints on local housing supply, housing diversity, in addition to a changing climate with intensification of hazards including heat, flooding and storm tide inundation, and a dispersed fragmented urban form rate high as key challenges.

As the principal centre and primary focal point for employment and business opportunities within the region, it is important to adopt a safe growth approach to development within the city centre to ensure the long-term prosperity of the region. Council is working towards maturing its resilience policy framework through integrating natural hazard risk management and climate adaptation processes at the city scale. However, further work is required to identify feasible mitigation and adaptation solutions for the city centre and the inner suburbs for future investment and delivery.

Cairns’ growth must be harnessed to create an environment that is reflective of Cairns’ unique local setting and communities, whilst creating a city that is engaging, energised, cool, walkable, connected and resilient. Serious challenges of housing supply and climate resilience urgently need to be addressed. The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project provides a comprehensive planning, design, policy, capital works and development initiative to deliver this over time, building on all of the tremendous natural assets central Cairns possesses.



# Executive Summary

## Engaging stakeholders

The Project has been prepared through an iterative process of presenting and discussing ideas with Council and community, and refining and adjusting and developing content. This has occurred via a series of Project Design Hubs.

- Design Hub 1 – identified key issues and challenges with CRC.
- Design Hub 2 - focussed on early proposals.
- Design Hub 3 – presented more developed project proposals.

Overarchingly, the key themes that have emerged of primary concern to stakeholders have been (in no particular order):

- Strong support for the idea of greening streets, with caveats around species and fauna that can be attracted.
- Strong support for the regeneration of ‘drains’ as more accessible, rehabilitated green spaces support active transport.
- Concern for personal safety in central Cairns.
- Concern for flood and storm tide inundation impacts, including impacts on development viability for new infill housing.
- A strong desire for enhanced public transport.
- Concern regarding ease of carparking in the CBD area.
- Importance of maintaining the existing qualities and attributes of Cairns; its verdant tropicality, local cultural richness and diversity, and First Peoples’ cultural and connection to Country.
- Concern regarding a lack of housing diversity and affordability.

## The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project

The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project delivers a growth framework for central Cairns, focussing on how precincts around the CBD can develop, how strong connections can be made between precincts and the CBD, and how increased housing supply and diversity can be supported. All of this is done through a design-led framework that amplifies the unique attributes of Cairns that are so important to the local community.

### Themes and initiatives

The Project content is organised around three key themes, which groups all the Project initiatives, as follows:

#### Precincts: Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

Delivering vibrant hubs around existing key destinations through housing intensification, strategic linkages and focussed capital works.

#### Connectors: A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

Delivering green corridors and walkable streets that enhance connectivity and provide cooling relief in the tropical climate, as well as revitalisation of Cairns drains as vital community green spaces.

#### Housing: A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

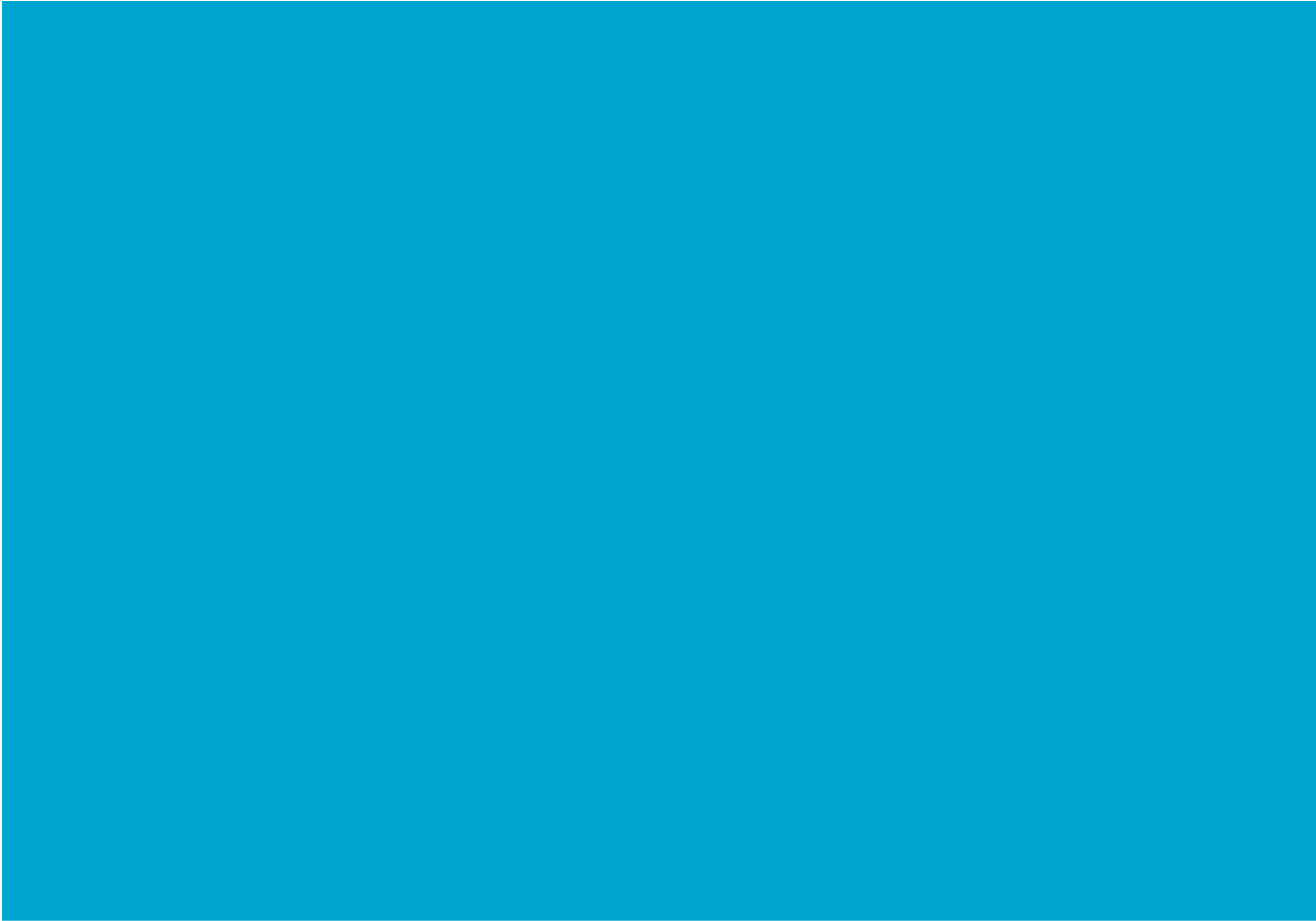
Delivering strategies to locate and support development of a greater range of affordable housing types emphasising well-located infill housing to ensure ready access to employment and services.

## A Road Map for implementation

To assist Cairns Regional Council to prioritise a logical sequencing of effort and funding, an implementation Road Map has been prepared which sets out a combination of policy, advocacy and capital (requiring funding) initiatives.

The Road Map provides a clear and strategic framework for prioritising initiatives based on community, environmental and economic benefits. It also outlines intended delivery timelines and outlines the roles and responsibilities of Council and key stakeholders for each initiative.

By providing a structured approach to initiatives, the Road Map helps the Council to focus on the most critical initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, and priorities align with the long-term visions of the plan and Council policies.





## Part A

# The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project overview





# 1 Project overview

## 1.1 Project framework

Cairns is a beautiful tropical city with a dynamic local economy and engaged community. Cairns is experiencing strong population growth with a projected additional nearly 70,000 people living in Cairns by 2050. CRC has set a clear direction where a significant part of that growth will be accommodated in the central Cairns area, near existing services and facilities.

Cairns' population growth needs to be harnessed to shape a better future for the City's centre, a future that is economically resilient, natural hazards resilient, connected, and directly expressive of its Cairns climate, unique local setting, and the characteristics of its people, building on its strong foundations of:

- Major local employers in government, healthcare, education, defence, and private sectors.
- Strong potential for infill housing and redevelopment near key destinations.
- Wide, open streets in a grid layout enabling ready active transport links and tree planting.
- A climate that supports ubiquitous greening.

The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project provides a comprehensive planning, design, policy, capital works and development program to deliver this over time, building on all of the tremendous natural assets central Cairns possesses.

The Project content is organised around three key themes, which groups all the Project initiatives, as follows:

**Precincts: Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods,** delivering vibrant hubs around existing key destinations through housing intensification, strategic linkages and focussed capital works.

**Connectors: A lattice of cool green streets and public Spaces,** delivering green corridors and walkable streets that enhance connectivity and provide cooling relief in the tropical climate, as well as revitalisation of Cairns drains as vital community green spaces.

**Housing: A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem,** delivering strategies for the location and implementation of a greater range of affordable housing types emphasising well-located infill housing to ensure ready access to employment and services.

In addition, the project provides a Project Road Map, an implementation framework that brings together policy, public realm and development initiatives together into an action plan and capital works pipeline.



Figure 1. Project themes



# 1 Project overview

## 1.2 Precincts: vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

Central Cairns is a dynamic regional city which serves as a major regional-scale services and facilities hub. While the CBD hosts tourism, retail, office, and dining sectors, important destinations including health, entertainment, retail and education facilities are located outside the CBD resulting in fragmented connectivity, poor pedestrian experiences, and a heavy reliance on private vehicles, ultimately diluting the economic performance and social experience of central Cairns as a whole.

The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project addresses the fragmentation of Cairns' city centre by intensifying activity around 3 key destinations to turn them into major hubs. These hubs are then connected to the CBD and one another.

**The Health Precinct** currently includes major health facilities, large state-owned sites, and an emerging JCU partnership. This area can be transformed over time to become a major hub of housing, health and knowledge facilities with vibrant, healthy tropical streetscapes that workers, students, and residents can enjoy. Restaurants/cafes and further complementary uses such as childcare can be encouraged to improve safety and vibrancy. Initiatives include facilitating higher intensity mixed-use development with housing and services, and creating shaded, active streets to promote a healthy, safe and engaging tropical environment.

**The Major Events Precinct** holds potential for significant regeneration as a hub for major events, with green promenades, dining streets, and parklets. Key initiatives include creating a shaded sports-themed promenade along Spence Street, creating a recreation corridor along Smiths Creek, and developing infill and higher intensity housing on sites outside the highly flood and storm tide inundation prone parts of the site.

**City Centre South** can be regenerated as a dynamic 'city front door' with high-density super green visitor accommodation interlaced with tropically green public and semi-public spaces. Initiatives include collaborative development across Ports North and private lands, mitigation of flood, storm tide inundation and coastal erosion, activating street fronts, and the revitalising and greening of Grafton and Abbott Streets.

These three precincts will develop over the long-term as major economic hubs and great tropical neighbourhoods, linked to the CBD and important services and facilities in central Cairns.



Figure 2. Health Precinct



Figure 3. Major Events Precinct



Figure 4. City Centre South Precinct



# 1 Project overview

## 1.3 Connectors: A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

Cairns' tropical setting and propensity for verdant green, combined with its natural sand dune landforms and landform give rise to a unique landscape character that can be the foundation of the regeneration of central Cairns.

A major advantage of inner-city living is the ability to walk to work and key services. However, in Cairns' tropical climate, walkability is hindered by heat—particularly along the city's wide bitumen road corridors. Heat mapping reveals dangerously high temperatures during peak daytime hours, making walking uncomfortable and unsafe. Increased urban canopy coverage is essential to reducing these temperatures, improving public health, and making central Cairns more liveable.

As residential density increases, so does the need for shaded streetscapes and accessible green spaces. Cairns' wide streets offer an excellent opportunity to introduce large-scale shade planting, transforming them into a network of cool, walkable routes. Additionally, the city's creek corridors, such as Smiths Creek and Lily Creek, have untapped potential as green connectors, enhancing parklands and improving active transport links.

To support the regeneration of central Cairns and reduce reliance on cars, a comprehensive shaded active travel network is essential – a lattice of cool green streets and public spaces. This long-term transformation is to be achieved through three key initiatives:

**Green Ways** – Shaded streets that connect key destinations, improving walkability and reducing heat exposure.

**Stream Ways** – Regenerated drains and creeks turned into green recreational corridors, enhancing both ecology and connectivity.

**Community Ways** – Local, community-led greening projects that contribute to a more sustainable and shaded city centre.

This ambitious but essential undertaking requires coordinated investment and long-term planning. Stakeholders have expressed strong support for citywide tree planting, recognizing its importance in addressing urban heat. However, they have also highlighted the urgent need for improved public transport, particularly in and around the city centre, as a key part of any strategy that enhances accessibility in central Cairns.



Image 1. Lake Street Green Way



Image 2. Smiths Creek Stream Way



Image 3. Promenade on Spence Street

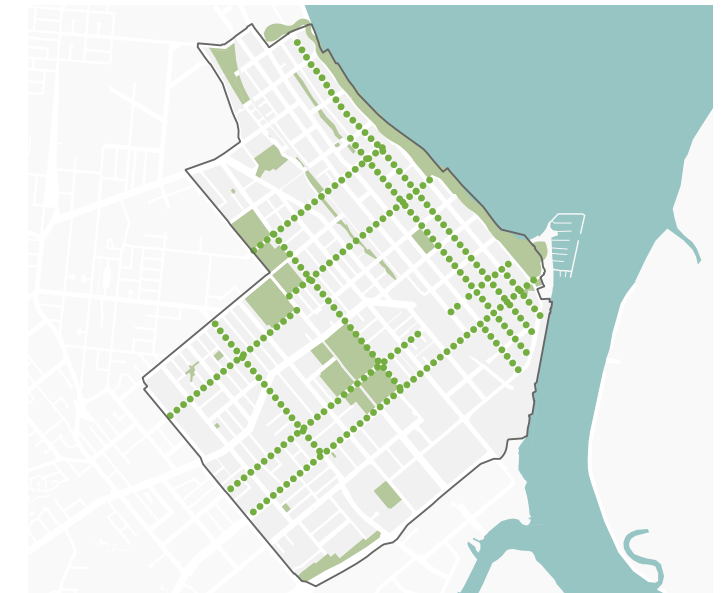


Image 4. Proposed Green Ways



Image 5. Proposed Stream Ways

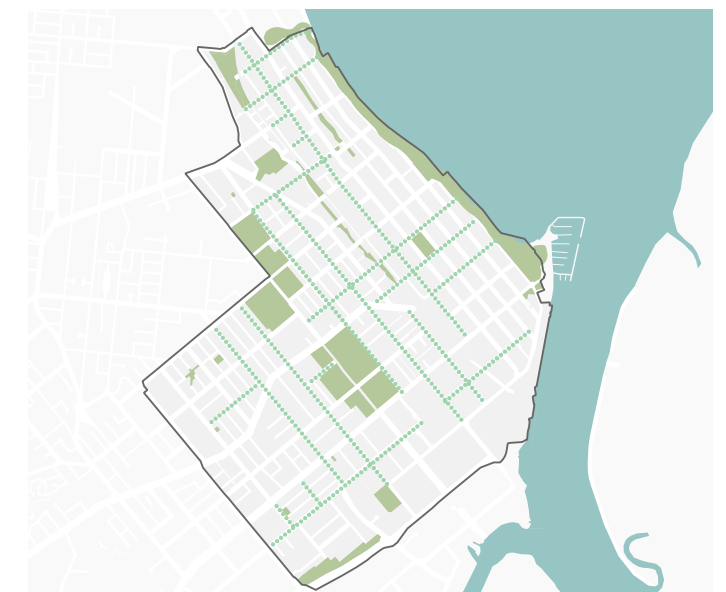


Image 6. Proposed Community Ways



# 1 Project overview

## 1.4 Housing: A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

Cairns is facing a significant housing shortage, driven by a growing population and increasing demand for diverse and affordable housing options. The delivery of housing is also impacted by a number of other factors including the increasing impacts of climate change, such as flood risk, storm tide inundation and coastal erosion as well as economic constraints including changing market conditions, interest rate rises, and land and construction costs all of which present major challenges to delivering new housing.

A key enabler of development in Cairns is the management of climate impacts. Mitigation measures must be strengthened in central Cairns to address flooding, storm tide inundation, sea level rise, and coastal erosion.

In November 2024, the CRC endorsed the Local Housing Action Plan (LHAP), which outlines key actions to tackle the housing crisis.

The LHAP acknowledges CRC's role as an advocate, facilitator, funder, partner, provider, and regulator in the housing sector. Key actions include policy advocacy, investment in social housing, and fostering public-private partnerships to enhance housing supply.

In this context, the Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project provides both spatial and policy strategies to support the delivery of housing in central Cairns:

**The spatial strategy** promotes housing intensification within the three precincts:

- **Health Precinct** – Encourage increased housing density near hospitals and educational institutions.
- **City Centre South Precinct** – Support high-density development around the Convention Centre and Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal.
- **Major Events Precinct** – Facilitate infill housing and larger-scale redevelopments near Barlow Park and Spence Street.

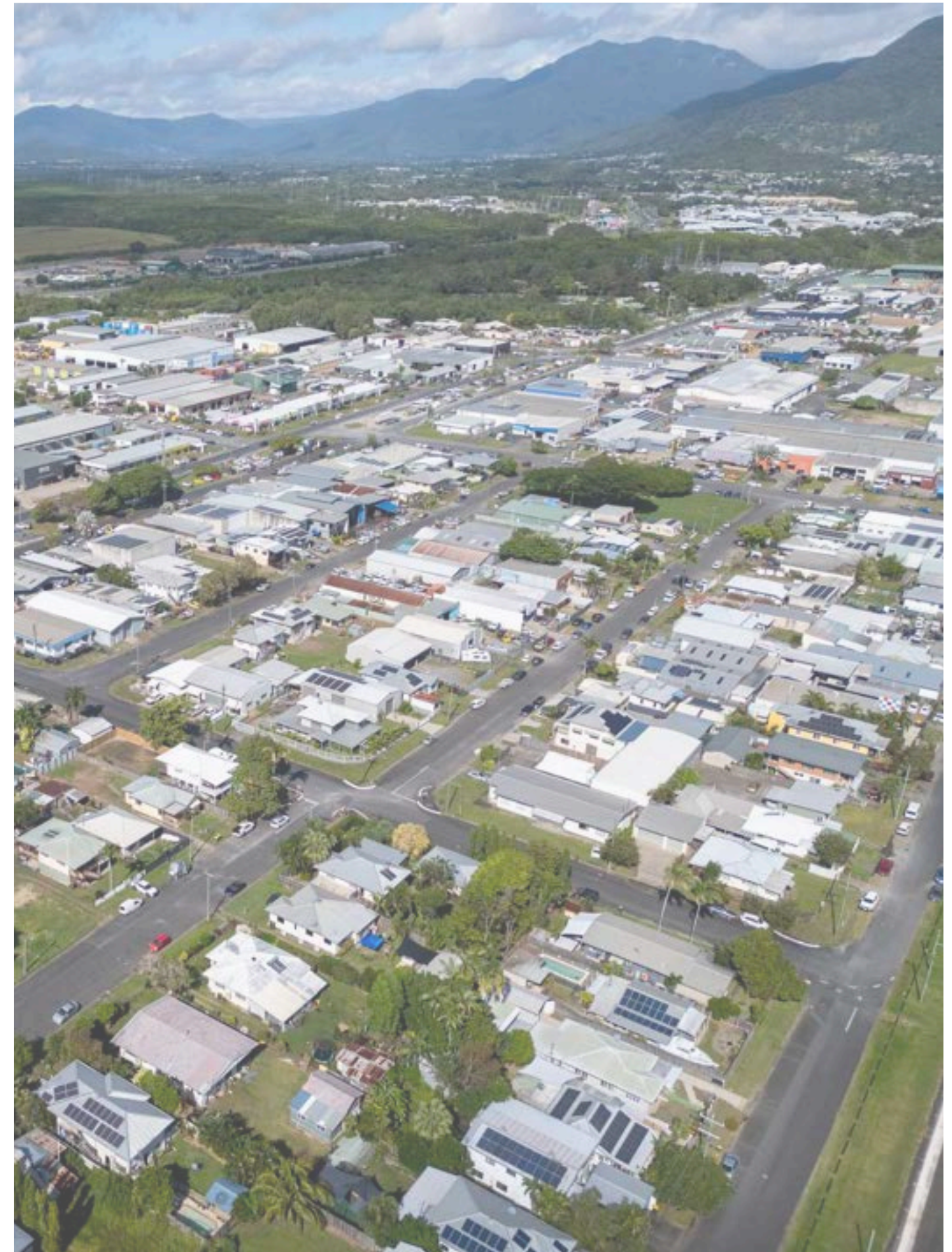
**The policy strategy** provides guidance for streamlining approvals to be implemented within the new planning scheme, focussing on:

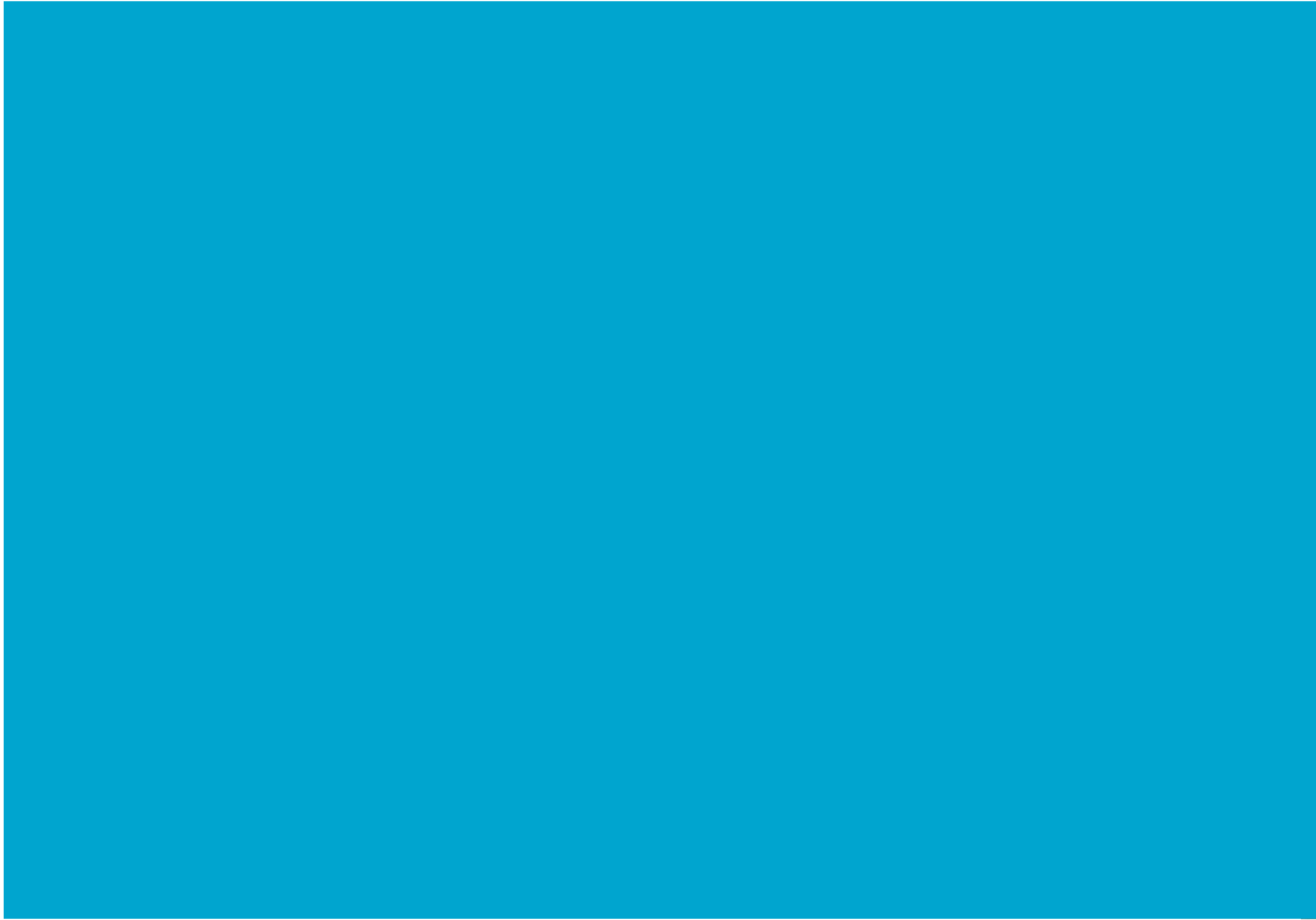
**Tropically responsive design** – Expanding urban canopy, maximising airflow, and integrating shaded outdoor spaces.

**Good neighbours** – Ensuring privacy, thoughtful dwelling configurations, and green buffers.

**Safe, community-oriented streets** – Active frontages, natural surveillance, and welcoming public spaces.

**Flood resilience** – Strengthening city-wide flood and storm tide inundation mitigation and ensuring compliance with the Flood and Inundations Hazard Overlay Code.

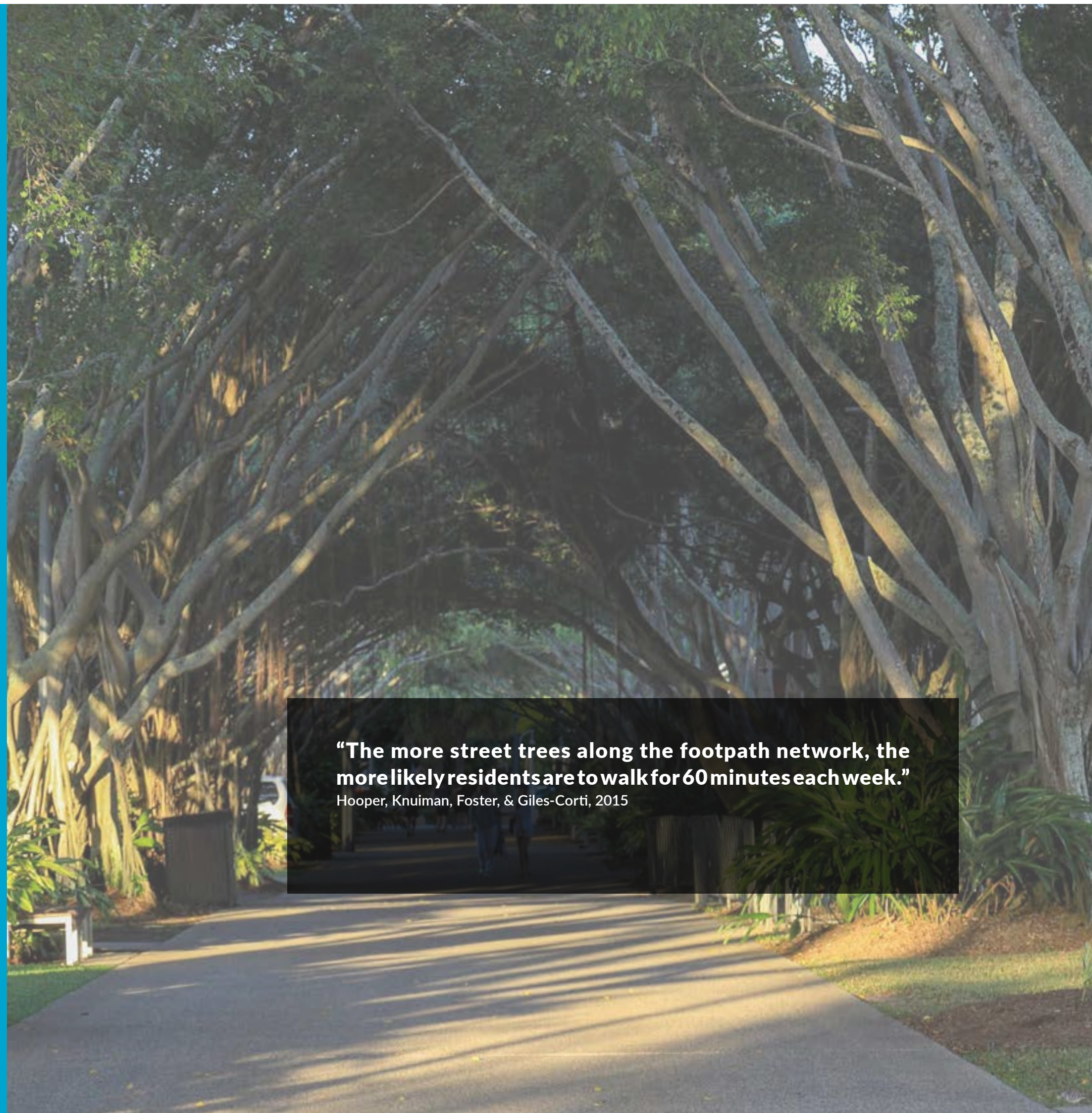






Part B

## Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project introduction



**“The more street trees along the footpath network, the more likely residents are to walk for 60 minutes each week.”**

Hooper, Knuiman, Foster, & Giles-Corti, 2015



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The context for regeneration

Cairns region is located on the Traditional Lands of First Nations Peoples, including the Djabugay; Yirrganydji; Buluwai, Gimuy Walubara Yidinji; Mandingalbay Yidinji; Gunggandji; Dulabed and Malanbara Yidinji; Bundabarra and Wadjanbarra Yidinji; Wanyurr Majay; Mamu and NgadjonJii peoples. Once a coastal landscape of mangroves and sand dunes, rich with food and cultural significance for First Nations people, Cairns has grown into a diverse and thriving city.

Today, 175,000 people call Cairns home, with over a fifth born overseas and nearly 10% identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The city’s residents, with a median age of 37, include many families, couples with children making up a quarter of the population.

Cairns’ economy is driven by healthcare and social services, tourism, education, aviation, marine and defence industries.

In CRC’s Our Cairns Survey undertaken in 2024, liveability, health care and the environment rated as the top three issues for local residents in planning for the future.

The Queensland Government Statistician’s Office (QGSO) projects that Cairns’ population will grow by 42 % between 2021 and 2046. In response, Cairns Regional Council, in collaboration with community, industry, and government stakeholders, has been developing the Towards 2050: Shaping Cairns Growth Strategy. The Strategy provides a long-term vision for managing growth across the city as a whole. It also emphasises the ongoing importance of the city centre to Cairns, and CRC has set the direction to accommodate more growth in the central Cairns area, close to existing services and facilities, to provide well-located housing with good access to education, employment, services and transport.

The Towards 2050: Shaping Cairns Growth Strategy has developed covering the key elements of housing, natural environment, resilience, tropical neighbourhoods, infrastructure, economy and culture. The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project effectively delivers these 7 strategies for the central area of Cairns through an integrated design framework and suite of initiatives.

Accommodating more of Cairns growth in central Cairns has its challenges, however it also presents outstanding opportunities to regenerate precincts and shape a stronger, more liveable and climate hazard resilient city centre for future generations.

Central Cairns is located on a low-lying coastal flat that was historically a mangrove and sand dune landscape. This positioning makes it highly vulnerable to flooding and storm tide inundation, sea level rise and coastal erosion. With a network of unshaded wide roads, and a high proportion of built-up areas, it is also very susceptible to extreme heat.

The city’s reliance on detached housing does not align with evolving needs, requiring a shift towards more diverse housing options. Affordability, as in other Australian cities, continues to be a primary challenge for the people of Cairns.

In addition, the current urban structure of Cairns, with services and facilities spread across a wide area, limits walkability and dilutes the strength of the city core.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for regeneration including:

- The presence of major employers in central Cairns including government, healthcare, tertiary education providers, defence, and private sector commercial and retail.
- Strong potentials for infill housing as well as underutilised larger sites near existing parks, schools, retail, health, cultural and entertainment facilities.
- An open grid street structure which means active transport connections can be readily made between multiple locations. In addition, Cairns’ wide streets allow ample room for cooling street tree planting, particularly in medians.
- Some very high amenity spaces of exceptionally unique urban quality or ‘Cairns-ness’ – green spaces, galleries, attractions – offering successful local exemplars to build upon.
- A climate that supports lush greening.

Central Cairns is at a critical juncture, with significant population growth, housing challenges and climate risks shaping its future. **Harnessing and shaping growth to regenerate central Cairns as a magnetic, liveable tropical city centre sits at the heart of this Project.**

Regeneration is:

**“The process of making an area, institution, etc. develop and grow strong again”.**

Oxford Dictionary definition of ‘regeneration’



# 1 Introduction

## Current uses and destinations

### KEY PLACES

- ① ESPLANADE
- ② ESPLANADE LAGOON
- ③ SHIELDS STREET
- ④ NORTHERN ACTIVITY PRECINCT
- ⑤ MUNRO MARTIN PARKLANDS
- ⑥ BARLOW PARK
- ⑦ WEST BARLOW PARK
- ⑧ PARRAMATTA PARK
- ⑨ CAIRNS SHOWGROUNDS
- ⑩ JONES PARK
- ⑪ CAIRNS CITY LIBRARY
- ⑫ CAIRNS PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE
- ⑬ CAIRNS MUSEUM
- ⑭ CAIRNS ART GALLERY
- ⑮ CAIRNS CONVENTION CENTRE
- ⑯ CAIRNS CRUISE LINER TERMINAL
- ⑰ CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL
- ⑱ THE PIER
- ⑲ NIGHT MARKETS
- ⑳ CAIRNS CENTRAL SHOPPING CENTRE
- ㉑ DFO CAIRNS
- ㉒ CAIRNS HOSPITAL
- ㉓ CAIRNS STATE HIGH SCHOOL
- ㉔ ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL
- ㉕ PARRAMATTA STATE SCHOOL
- ㉖ TRINITY BAY STATE HIGH SCHOOL
- ㉗ TAFE QUEENSLAND CAIRNS CAMPUS
- ㉘ JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
- ㉙ SCREEN QUEENSLAND STUDIOS
- ㉚ GRIFFITH PARK SPORTING FIELDS
- ㉛ ST MONICA'S COLLEGE



Figure 5. Current uses and destinations

## Indicative walkability

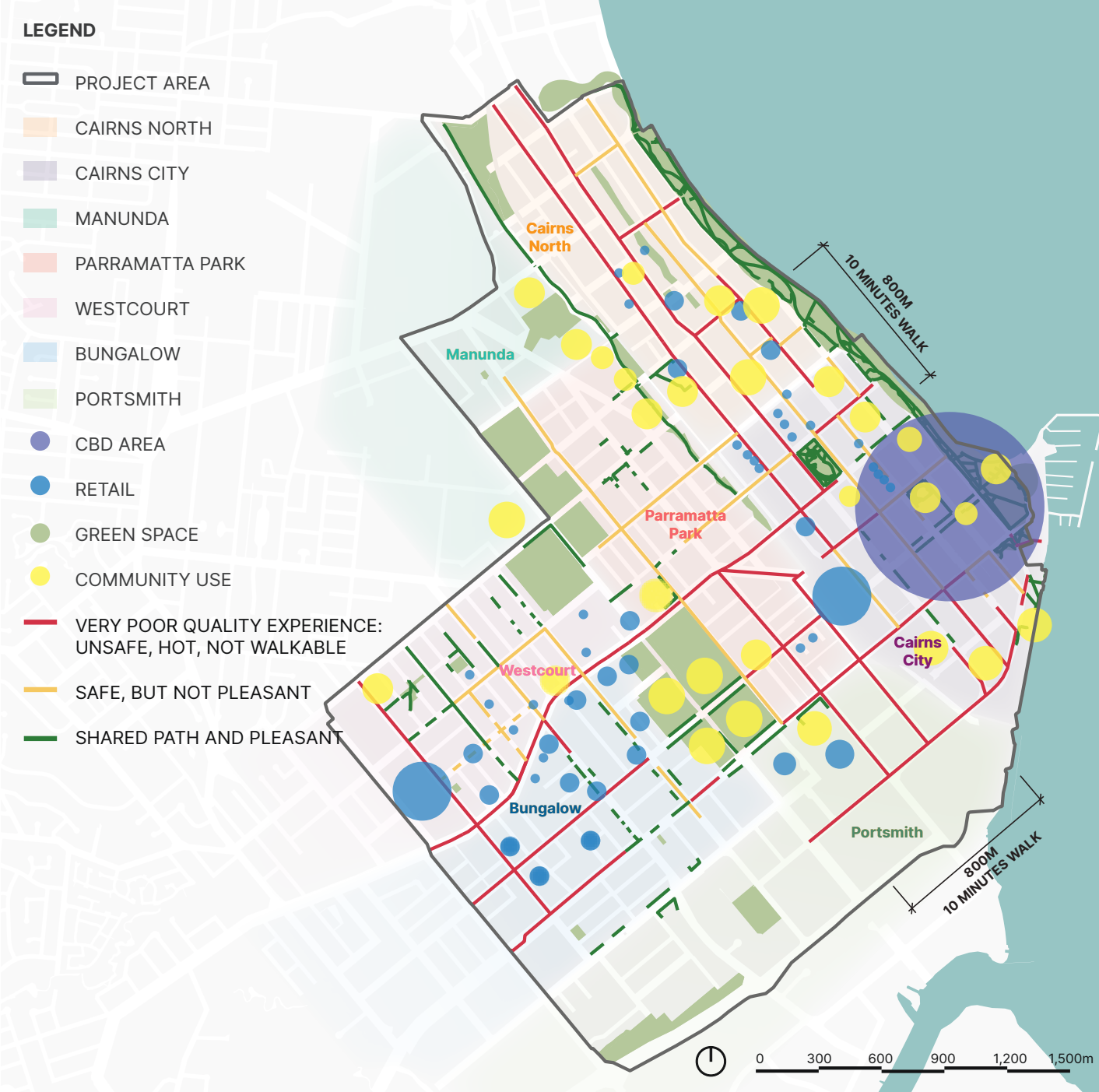


Figure 6. Indicative walkability

# 1 Introduction

Land surface temperature

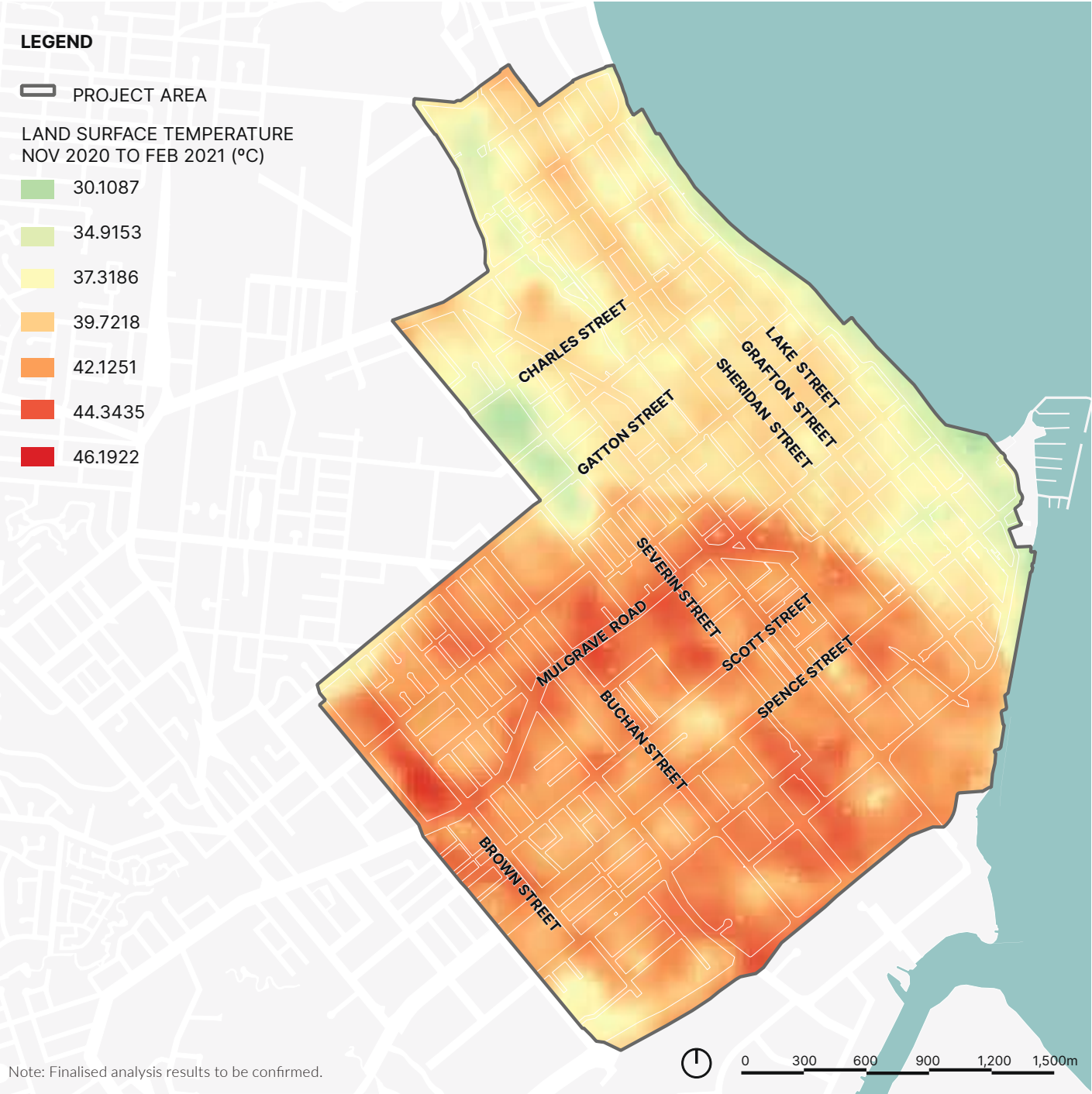


Figure 7. Land surface temperature  
(DRAFT: Urban Heat Island Management in the Cairns CBD)

Predicted (1% AEP) flood inundation

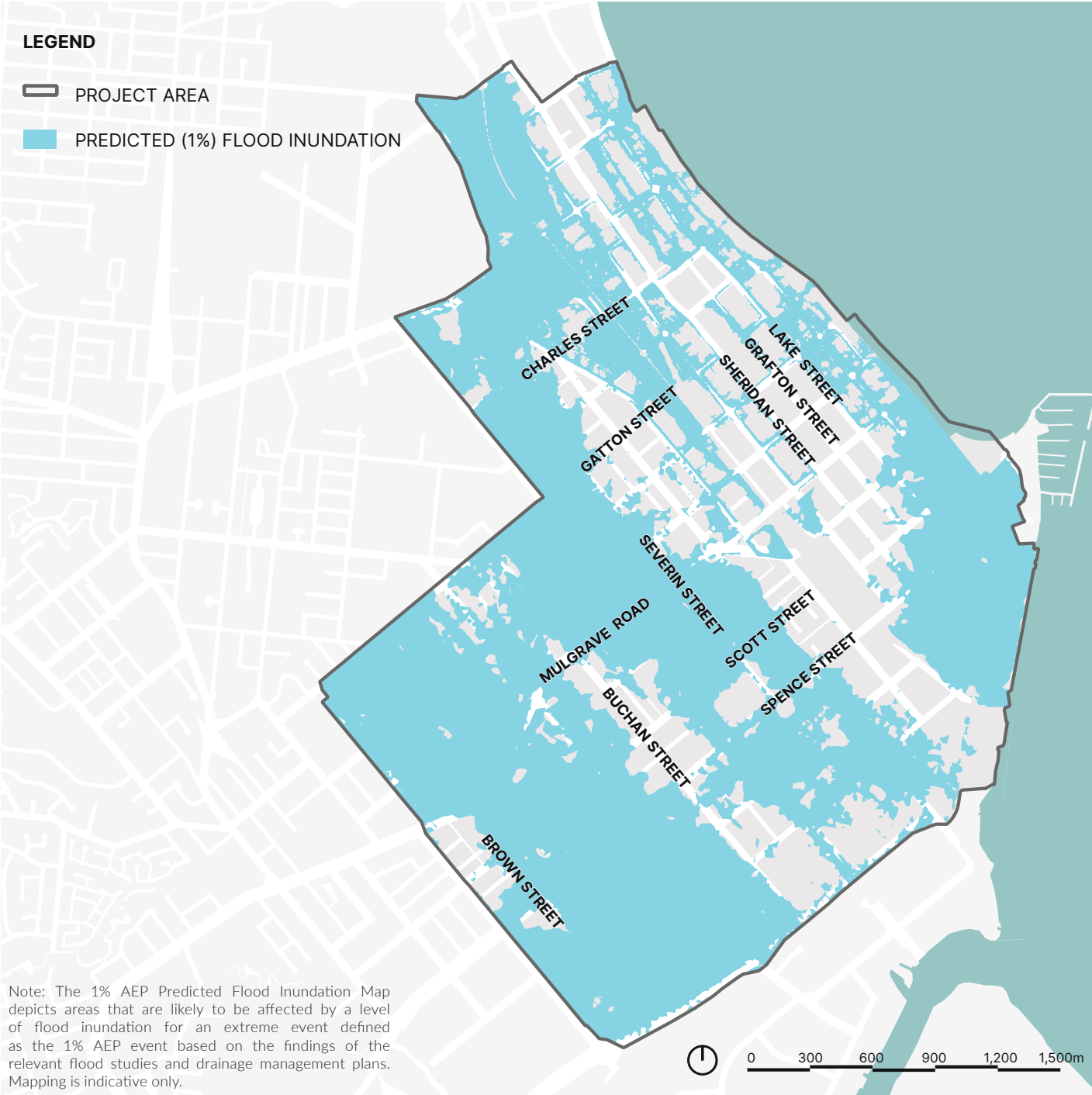


Figure 8. Predicted (1% AEP) flood inundation



# 1 Introduction

## 1.2 Developing the Project

This Project has been strongly influenced by CRC’s express objectives for central Cairns, stakeholder engagement, concurrent strategies, technical advice and key documents.

**Embedding the voice of community and stakeholders**  
Cairns Regional Council and the project team committed to a collaborative, design-led approach to shaping the future of central Cairns. At the heart of this approach has been a series of ‘Design Hubs’—intensive, on-the-ground engagement periods that anchored the project and enabled deep, place-based conversations.

The wide range of stakeholders engaged with for the Project included:

- Traditional Owners + Rangers
- Members of Youth Councillors
- High School Students
- Development Industry
- Governmental Agencies
- Local Peak Bodies and Institutions
- Community Based Organisations

Each hub included a range of activities such as collaborative design workshops, informal ‘drop-in’ sessions, and structured meetings with key stakeholders. These hubs brought together local knowledge and technical expertise, facilitating real-time co-design with community members, industry, key stakeholders, and Council representatives.

The program built on Council’s existing community touch-points, including the Towards 2050 Community Panel, industry advisory groups, and Cairns Regional Council’s social media and project page.

The following diagram provides an overview of the key themes explored during each hub and illustrates how the insights gathered directly shaped the direction of the Urban Regeneration Framework.

### Community & stakeholder project ambitions

Hub 1 was predominantly internal facing with Council representatives ensuring the Project team had a clear understanding of existing challenges, perceived opportunities as well as of the substantial prior community feedback gathered through the Towards 2050 engagement activities. It also included a Walk on Country and ‘Have Your Say’ Map.

Hub 2 brought together the community, industry, key stakeholders and Council staff to explore the project’s key challenges and opportunities, and to identify the priorities that should guide future change.

The community expressed a strong desire for a vibrant, inclusive and resilient tropical neighbourhood in central Cairns, shaped by quality infill housing and public spaces that support both people and place. Industry participants emphasised the need for greater clarity, certainty and consistency in the planning process to support the timely delivery of diverse, high-quality infill housing.

Together, the community and stakeholders defined the following shared ambitions for the project:

### New housing should be:

- Delivered through quality infill development, such as triplexes on large lots or apartments on amalgamated sites.
- Well-located, within walking distance of key services, jobs, green spaces, and daily needs.
- Diverse and inclusive, offering a range of housing types—apartments, duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and smaller-lot homes—to meet different needs and budgets.
- Supportive of key workers, providing rental and ownership options for nurses, educators, hospitality and tourism staff, and students.
- Expanded in social housing options, to improve access for those who need it most.
- Feasible to deliver, recognising development and construction challenges faced by industry and ensuring greater clarity, certainty, and consistency in planning process.
- Designed for tropical living, with breezy, shaded, green environments that encourage outdoor lifestyles and community connection.
- Resilient to natural hazards (flood, storm tide inundation, sea level rise and coastal erosion), through smart design and planning that reduces damage and speeds up recovery.

	HUB 1 Ambitions	HUB 2 Ideas	HUB 3 Plans, Places and Priorities	HUB 4 Outcomes
Conversations	Unpacked project challenges and opportunities, shared technical insights, and defined community priorities  An interactive map on the project’s “Have Your Say” page	Explored early ideas to deliver the ambition—precinct boundaries, priority connections for cool, green streets and public spaces, and housing diversity opportunities	Explored further developed design concepts from Hub 2 to deliver the ambition—precinct boundaries, priority connections for cool, green streets and public spaces, and housing diversity opportunities	Shared the final Urban Regeneration Framework and Implementation Roadmap
Integration Outcome	Anticipated community and stakeholder ambitions for the project	Foundation elements of the Urban Regeneration Framework	Refined Urban Regeneration Framework and community views on recommended projects	Broad understanding and shared ownership of the Framework and investment priorities

Table 1. Key themes overview

1 Introduction

Public realm investment should:

- Create a connected green network of shaded, accessible paths for walking and cycling—including Green Ways, Stream Ways, and Community Ways.
- Cool the city and manage flood risk, making central Cairns more climate-responsive.
- Restore natural systems, bringing nature back into the city, respecting water flows, and supporting healthy ecosystems.
- Provide high-quality green spaces, where the community can gather, connect, and relax.
- Make public spaces feel safer and more welcoming by incorporating lighting, active frontages, shaded seating, and design features that encourage community presence and deter crime.
- Celebrate Country, embedding Indigenous culture and heritage into the design of places, together with integrated long term management strategies and helping everyone learn and connect with the area’s story.

Support for the Urban Regeneration Framework & Road Map priorities

Throughout Hubs 2 and 3, the community, key stakeholders and Council staff explored and refined design ideas to bring their shared ambitions to life. Together, they tested early concepts including precinct boundaries, priority connections for green and cool streets, public space improvements, and opportunities to support diverse infill housing. These ideas were further developed into a refined Urban Design Framework and Delivery Road Map.

Precincts - Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

Participants helped define three focus areas including the Health Precinct, Major Events Precinct and City Centre South Precinct. Together, they explored each precinct’s vision and purpose, identified key initiatives, housing intensification opportunities, and potential catalyst projects such as street cooling and greening, and public space upgrades. Generally, the precinct approach has been supported, with strong input that public transport needed further consideration.

Connectors - A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

Participants strongly supported the idea of creating a connected network of Stream Ways, Green Ways and Community Ways. They valued the transformation of existing concrete-lined channels into naturalised creek beds, along with making key streets greener and more inviting through new trees, improved footpaths and better bike and transport connections. These upgrades were seen as essential to creating cooler, more comfortable public spaces and making it easier for people to walk, cycle and move around the city. This approach was considered a key step in delivering on the shared ambitions of the project.

Housing - A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

Hub participants recognised the need to intensify housing in central Cairns while ensuring high-quality, climate-responsive design. There was strong support for Planning Scheme amendments and a more streamlined development assessment process, focused on a clear set of non-negotiables to deliver better outcomes with greater clarity, consistency and certainty. Key priorities included stronger measures to mitigate natural hazards (flooding, storm tide inundation, sea level rise and coastal erosion), passive surveillance through ‘eyes

on the street’, designs that support outdoor living and privacy. Community members also expressed the importance of new homes providing natural cooling and ventilation. Developers highlighted the value of demonstration projects and opportunities for medium-density housing types such as plexes and walk-ups and apartment buildings, particularly where planning processes are simplified and feasibility is improved. They noted the potential for pre-approved housing types and reduced infrastructure charges to encourage uptake, especially among smaller-scale builders.

Recommended projects – Road Map foundations

The community and key stakeholders were presented with a list of potential catalyst projects to accelerate delivery of the Urban Regeneration Framework. Across the board, participants strongly prioritised

Planning Scheme amendments and streamlining the Development Assessment process as essential to enabling quality infill development. Other top priorities included the Lake Street Green Way, revitalisation of the Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal area, and regeneration of the Depot site.

The Project’s design-led engagement activities have laid a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration and co-design. Ongoing co-design with community, industry and other stakeholders to further develop the details of recommended projects and policies (Road Map initiatives) will benefit from including diverse voices to make projects and places richer and reflect culture, identity and its people.




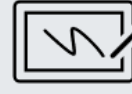




	15 Targeted 1:1 meetings held		52 Comments on the Have-Your-Say Interactive Map
	222 People attended 3 intensive Design Hubs		24 Workshops held during Design Hubs
	4 Traditional Owner Yarns		23 Local Industry Representatives participated
	15 School students and Youth Council members participated in 2 workshops		14 Key ambitions identified for the project relating to new housing and public realm investments

Table 2. Participation highlights



# 1 Introduction

## CRC Project objectives

It is important also to note that the original project objectives provided by CRC have significantly driven the project outcomes. Those key project objectives are:

(a) Plan for amenity and soft and hard infrastructure requirements to support urban consolidation, for well-located and diverse housing supply;

(b) Identify appropriate housing opportunities and typologies right for the identified precinct; areas, develop planning policy recommendations that support these typologies;

(c) Plan for climate resilience and hazard mitigation;

(d) Propose urban design interventions and project opportunities that promote connectivity, access, inclusion and safety elements to improve all-abilities-accessibility, CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design), walkability and liveability;

(e) Promote thermal comfort and health outcomes, identifying place-based opportunities for heat reduction, including improved urban canopy and access to green space;

(f) Plan for community infrastructure needs;

(g) Design places that reflect the community’s diverse identities and incorporate connection to Country principles and articulation of the community’s character to support and enhance sense of place; and

(h) Identify unique nodes that belong within a connected precinct and city, consider wayfinding, urban design and place-making strategies.

(i) Enabling economic investment, vibrancy, and prosperity for the city.

## Key documents

The Project strategies have drawn strongly on the following key documents:

- MajorEventsPrecinct-DevelopmentOpportunities and Vision Report - FINAL
- DRAFT: Urban Heat Island Management in the Cairns CBD, BMT 2022
- Towards 2050 Growth Strategy – Draft Technical Studies
- Tropical Urbanism – Planning Policy
- Designing for Density in the Tropics – Design Guide
- Cairns Plan 2016
- Cairns LGA Social and Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan (CSAHP)
- Limitations to Medium Density Residential Development Report (2019)
- Urban Change Readiness - Studio THI, 2023
- Cairns Climate Change Strategy 2030 (CCS)
- Coastal Hazards Adaptation Strategy (CHAS)
- CHAS Phase 7 – Cost Benefit Analysis of Cairns CBD Adaptation Options Report (Dr Boyd Blackwell) and Cost Benefit Analysis of Cairns CBD Adaptation Options
- Supplementary Report (BMT)
- Cairns City Centre Masterplan, 2019
- Active Transport Strategy
- Cairns City Centre Masterplan, 2011
- Cairns City Centre Commercial Review 2020
- Urban Heat Island Management in the Cairns CBD Study

- Cairns Regeneration Project: Constructability & Feasibility Paper (Bull and Bear Economic Analysis)
- JCU Heat sensor data
- CRC Corporate Plan
- Project brief.

## Introducing Project elements and themes

The resulting Cairns Urban Precincts Regeneration Project embraces all of the above issues and objectives, formulating a suite of measures encompassing urban structure, planning policies, public realm investment, and strategic development in response.

To ease navigation, these initiatives are grouped in the 3 categories of precincts, connectors, and housing.

**Precincts:** This theme focuses on intensification of activity around existing key destinations in the city centre area, delivering a more vibrant, less dispersed city centre, to deliver vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

**Connectors:** This theme focuses on developing green corridors and walkable streets to enhance connectivity whilst countering the impacts of heat island effects. It also focuses on enhancing green spaces, revitalising Cairns ‘drains’ to deliver a lattice of cool green streets and public spaces.

**Housing:** This theme seeks to provide a well-located affordable housing types that cater to the needs of all residents to deliver a thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

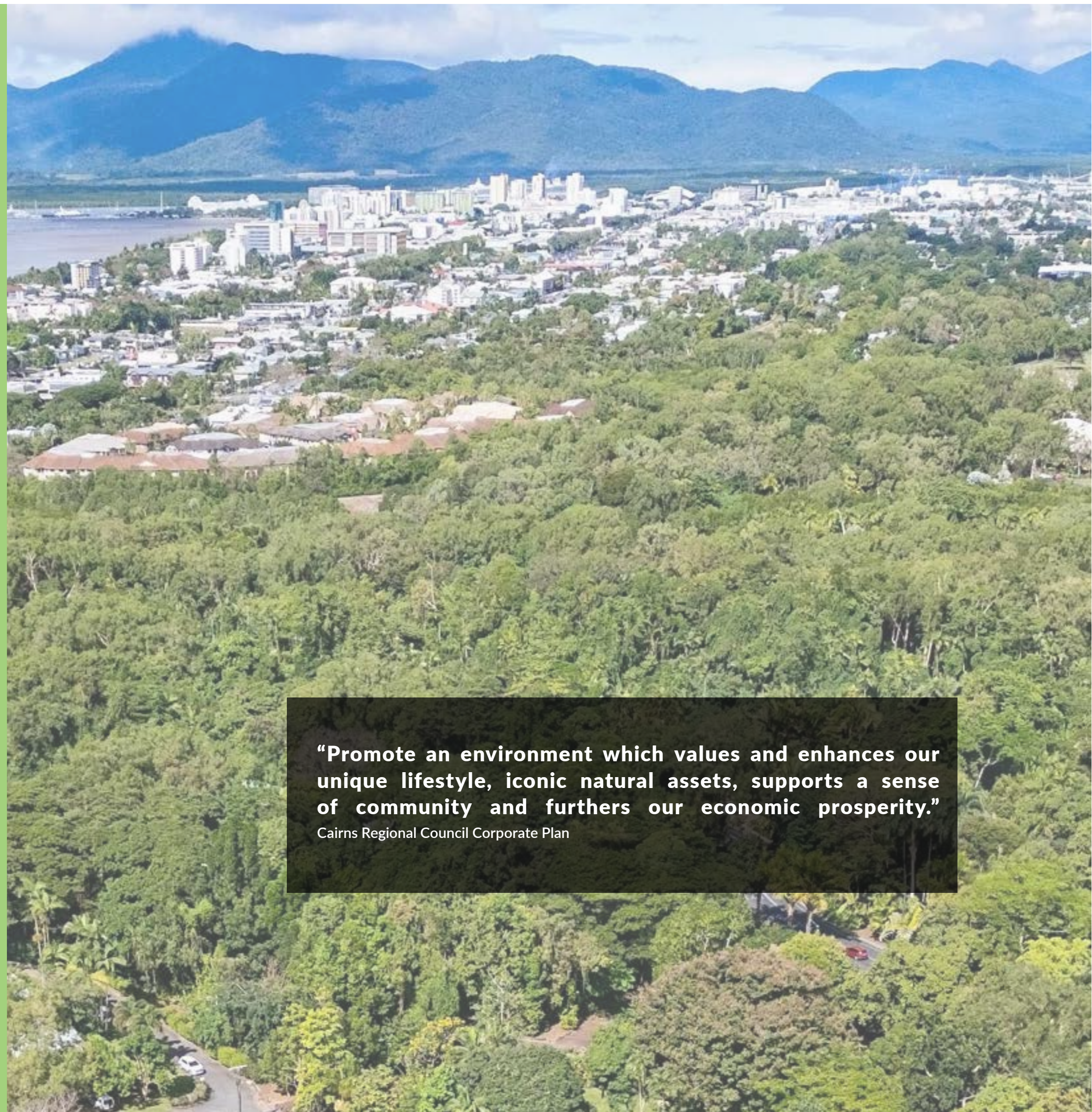
**The Implementation Road Map** brings together all policy, public realm and development facilitation initiatives into an action plan and capital works pipeline.

Together, these elements combined to provide a comprehensive framework for the regeneration of central Cairns.



Part B

Precincts:  
Vibrant tropical hubs  
and neighbourhoods



**“Promote an environment which values and enhances our unique lifestyle, iconic natural assets, supports a sense of community and furthers our economic prosperity.”**

Cairns Regional Council Corporate Plan



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### 2.1 Precincts overview - a new urban structure for Central Cairns

Central Cairns ‘punches well above its weight’ as a regional city centre. It has a magnetic waterfront precinct with visitors from around the world enjoying diverse dining, and generous waterside tropical landscape. The CBD contains important cultural, retail and office facilities accessed by residents from a very wide region.

Within the wider central Cairns area there are major ‘anchor’ facilities, Cairns Hospital and Private Hospital, TAFE, Barlow Park and Cairns Showgrounds, Cairns Central Shopping Centre, Cairns Convention Centre and Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal. Numerous retail mini strips and islands have emerged along Mulgrave Rd, Sheridan and Lake Streets, along with schools, sports fields, and community services. Central Cairns has all the ‘anchor’ ingredients of a highly successful and thriving regional city centre.

These important destinations are dispersed over a wide area which extends roughly 3km north-south and 3km east-west. Retail and higher density housing has, over time, been located in areas that don’t necessarily correspond with major destinations. The long-term result is a centre that is experienced as fragmented, where people are very reliant on private vehicles to move around, and report concerns with personal safety and lack of protection from the tropical elements.

Cairns’ forecast population increase is a vital opportunity to reshape central Cairns’ future as clearly defined interconnected hubs which connect to the CBD and support its important role in Cairns.

Urban renewal projects Newcastle, Sunshine Coast, and Wollongong have clearly demonstrated the benefits of intensifying housing and other complementary activities around existing destinations.

These benefits have included:

- Less reliance on cars by providing opportunities to walk to employment and services.
- Increasing localised spending in businesses and creation of new local businesses and jobs.
- Enhanced personal safety by having more people ‘on streets’ and ‘with eyes to the street’.
- Enhanced localised amenity and community connection.
- Better utilisation of existing infrastructure.
- Improved health through increased walking and social connection.

There is an urgent need to apply a new, more focused urban structure in central Cairns, one that shapes growth to **intensify activities around key destinations to form ‘hubs’** and connects these to the central hub of the CBD. Building on existing ‘anchors’ of activity, 3 distinct hubs are proposed:

**The Health Precinct** – building on the investment in health services and research in the precinct and the demand for housing for hospital and JCU staff and students.

**The Major Events Precinct** – building on access to existing community facilities like parks, schools and future 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games-related investment in Barlow Park and opportunities for infill housing as well as larger site redevelopment over time.

**City Centre South Precinct** – building on the Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal and Convention Centre as visitor generators and destinations, as well as larger redevelopment sites.



Figure 9. Precinct areas

**Crucially, these hubs need to be connected into the heart of the CBD and to one another, together forming a strong urban structure to guide targeted investment and strategic development over time.**



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### 2.2 Health Precinct

#### Context and potential

The Cairns Health Precinct is a key hub for healthcare, education, and employment. Anchored by major institutions, it is a significant economic driver with strong potential for growth and revitalisation.

Cairns Hospital, the region's largest referral hospital, supports thousands of jobs and many businesses along Lake Street. The JCU Cairns Hospital Innovation Hub (CHIC), under construction, will enhance the precinct through advanced research and education. Both of these are set to grow further. Other major institutions include Cairns Private Hospital and allied health services, and Cairns High School, all contributing to the precinct's daily activity.

Despite its importance, the precinct faces issues such as poor walkability, limited access, and safety concerns for night shift workers. There is also a need for more diverse housing close to services to support the growing workforce and student base.

Several sites within the precinct are suitable for redevelopment into higher-intensity housing and mixed use, including underused land along Lake and Grafton Streets, the remainder of the CHIC site, and public land west of Lily Creek.

#### A vision for the future

With strong institutional anchors, ongoing investment, and available development sites, the Health Precinct has the potential to develop as a lively, mixed-use urban hub, with tropical shaded streets, inner city living and safe walkable, healthy streets. Precinct regeneration needs to focus on housing, public realm investment, and catalyst development sites.



Figure 10. Health Precinct illustration



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### Precinct initiatives

The plan on the right describes the key elements of the regeneration of the Health Precinct as a key hub for central Cairns. These are:

#### Housing intensification

New medium to high density housing needs to be located within an easy 5-minute walk around the hospital, providing accommodation for hospital and JCU staff and students. This housing should be provided in 8+ storey apartments (subject to height restrictions relating to airport operation) on currently underdeveloped sites, potentially through site amalgamation.

#### Interactive safe streetscapes

As redevelopment occurs, it is vitally important that interactive retail and service facilities – or ‘active frontages’ are provided on the ground floor to create a precinct that is lively and safe to move around, including those uses that will stay open into the evening.

### A connected and walkable precinct

Shaded, cool and accessible connections need to be made between key destinations as follows:

- Along Grove Street linking to housing areas in Manunda, Parramatta Park and TAFE.
- Along Upward Street linking residential areas to the Hospital Precinct and Esplanade.
- Along Lake Street and Grafton Street.

Lake and Grafton Street pedestrian and active transport upgrades will link the Health Precinct back into the CBD over time.

### An exemplar of the Queensland Government’s ‘Healthy Places, Healthy People’ Policy

This policy emphasises delivering accessibility, convenience, personal safety, vibrancy and inclusive, cool, green and climate responsive places. Working together with precinct partners to deliver this could unlock funding and collaborative public space projects.

### Catalytic development

CRC’s focus on developing key catalyst projects in the precinct will help stimulate change.

The CHIC site is a key site. In future this site needs to accommodate mixed use encompassing institutional facilities, ground floor retail and accommodation for precinct workers.

There are several sites in government ownership that have excellent potential for significant housing redevelopment, west of Lily Creek. More detail is provided overleaf.

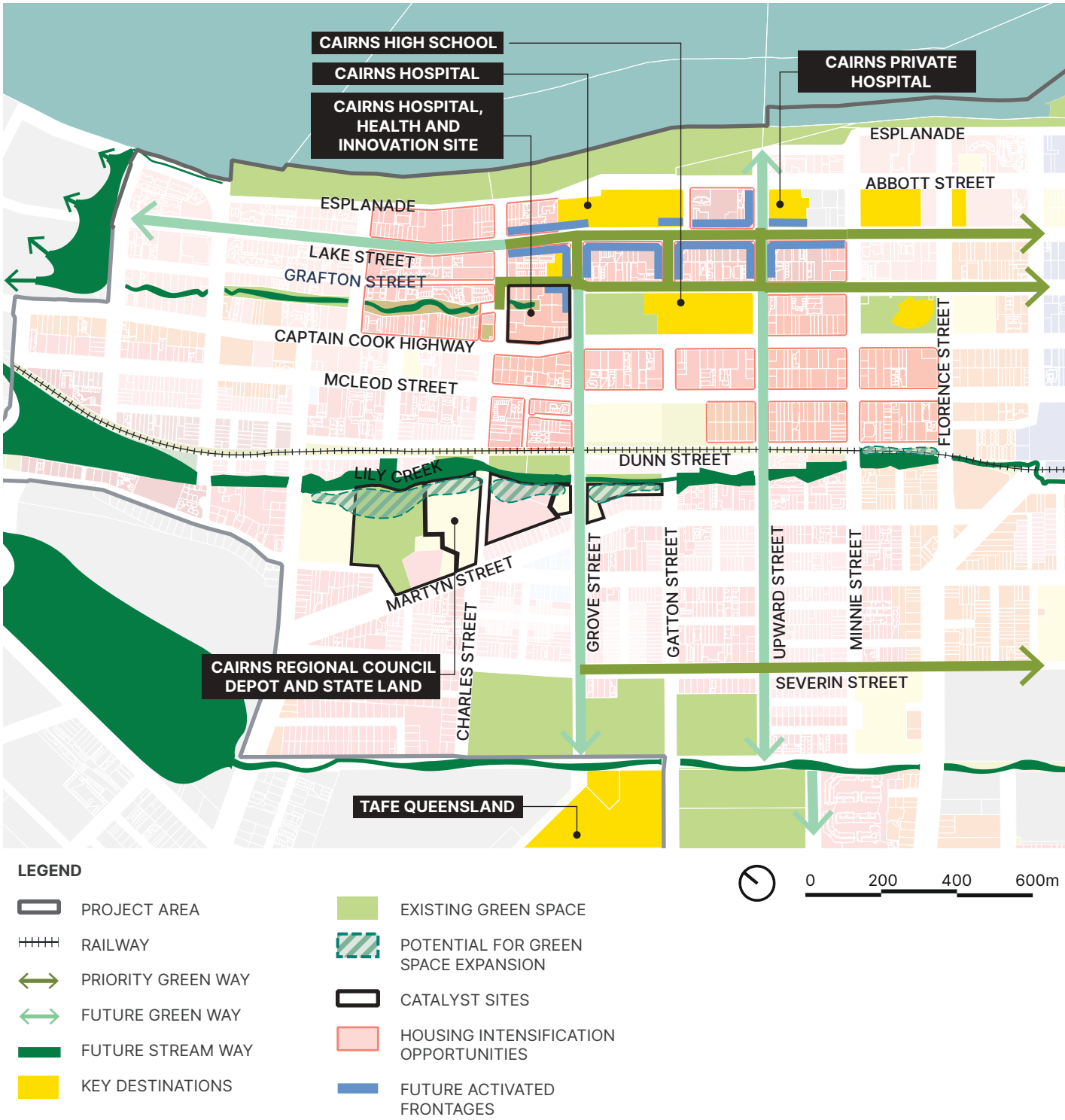


Figure 11. Health Precinct overview

## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### Catalysing change: transforming CRC Works Depot and adjacent sites

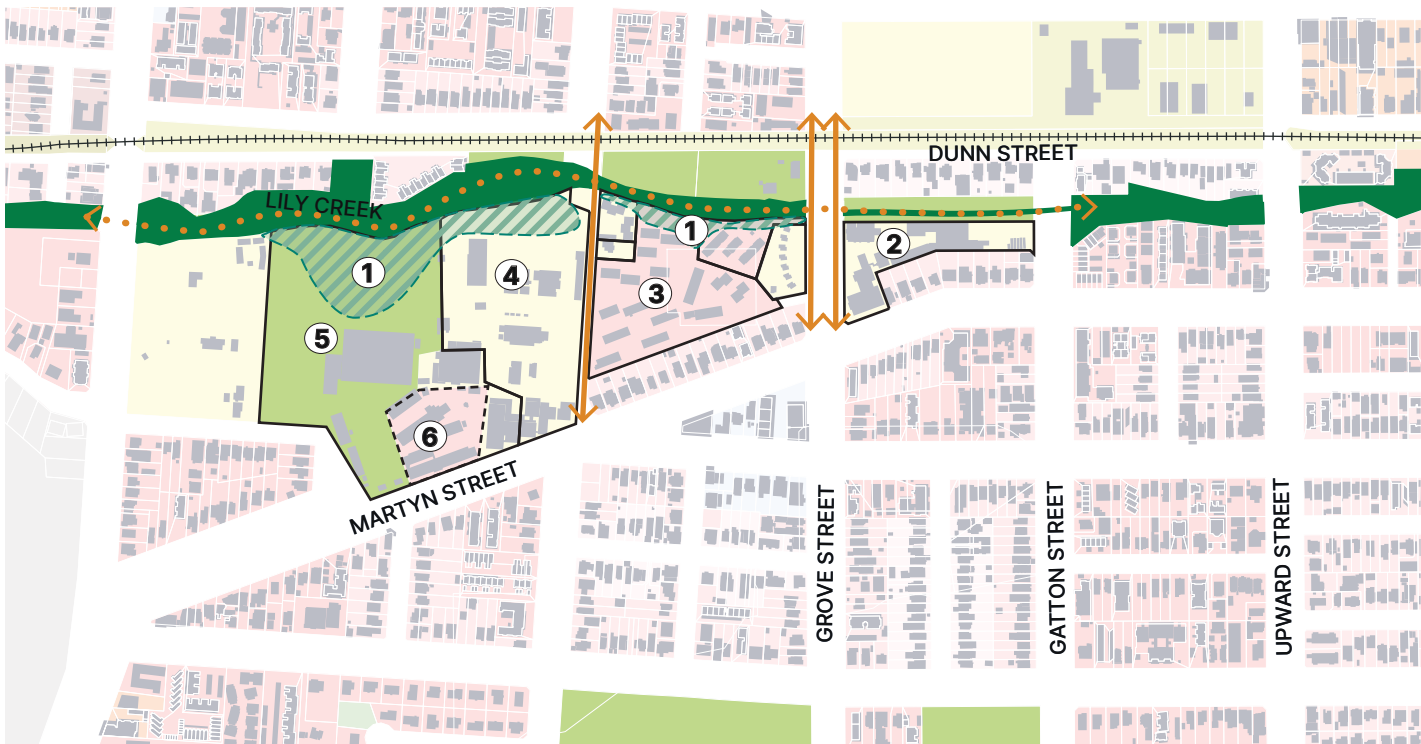
A suite of publicly owned landholdings south of Lily Creek present a major opportunity to support Cairns' growing population through the delivery of a high-quality affordable living precinct with community, public and private sector housing integrating sports, community services, and parklands.

The current site comprises the State Government Public Works Depot, Aboriginal Seniors Public Housing, the State Heritage listed Grove Street Pensioner's Cottages, CRC Works Depot, Cairns Netball Association and Martin Street Sports Park, and Young Australia League (YAL), who provide important homelessness services. The public housing, YAL services, Netball Association and users of the Martyn Street Sports Park are all vitally important occupiers of the site who need to maintain presence on the site over the long term. However, renewal and improvement of facilities for all of these stakeholders could be unlocked following the relocation of the two works Depots, enabling a comprehensive master plan and community-led renewal of the site in the long term.

These sites could, in the future, accommodate a mix of community, public, and affordable housing and high-quality greenspace alongside Lily Creek, delivered through strategic partnerships.

Realising this vision will require collaborative design and deep community engagement. Key priorities include:

- **Expanding the Lily Creek corridor** – Creating new parklands in collaboration with community groups to enhance public green space. More detail is provided the following chapter.
- **Public housing improvement** – Working closely with Aboriginal Seniors to create more flood resilient homes while maintaining affordability and community connections.
- **State Government works and CRC Site transition** – Planning for the long-term conversion of this site into much-needed mixed density housing, through Community Housing and/or private sector partnerships.
- **Martyn Street Sports Park & Cairns Netball Association** – Engaging with stakeholders to develop a long-term master plan that balances sports facilities, active recreation and green space.
- **Integrating homelessness services** – Ensuring the renewal process includes the maintenance and enhancement of existing support services.



#### Strategies

1. Expand Lily Creek corridor to create a new park, working with community groups.
2. Existing State Government works site – long term transition to housing.
3. Existing public housing – renewal over time in close collaboration with existing residents. Subject to flood mitigation.
4. CRC Depot - longer term transition to mixed density housing. Enhance flood resilience.
5. Cairns Netball Association and Martyn Street Sports Park - work closely with stakeholders on long term master plan for sport facilities and potential housing. Subject to flood mitigation.
6. Renew and maintain current homelessness services on site as a part of integrated housing development.

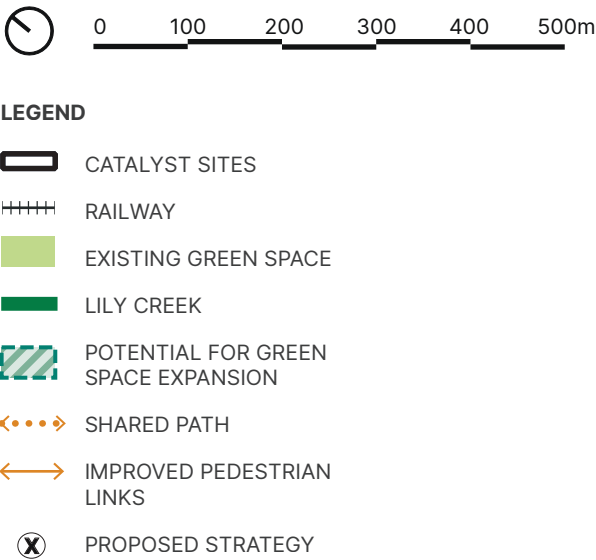


Figure 12. Catalyst site



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### 2.3 Major Events Precinct

#### Context and potential

Cairns' Major Events Precinct is a key cultural and economic hub, anchored by Barlow Park and the Cairns Showgrounds. It hosts major sporting events, exhibitions, and festivals.

Barlow Park, seating 15,000, is home to Cairns Athletics and the Northern Pride, and hosts NRL matches. It's set for a grandstand upgrade ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Next door, the 17-hectare Cairns Showgrounds hosts the annual Cairns Show, drawing up to 70,000 visitors, alongside various year-round events. The precinct also features sports fields, parks, and a BMX track and is close to growing employment precincts relating to the ports, Defence, marine and training sectors.

While flood and storm tide inundation risks limit redevelopment in some nearby areas requiring broader mitigation, there are opportunities for near-term regeneration. The precinct is also subject to heat island affect, and new development needs to be accompanied by significant shade tree planting. Infill and low-density housing can be introduced near schools, council offices, and within walking distance of Cairns Central. Small businesses on Spence, Bunda, and Severin Streets can be revitalised with more interactive frontages. Large-format retail sites south of Spence Street have redevelopment potential, especially for dining and event-focused uses. The heritage-listed Smiths Creek could be transformed into a green corridor for community connection, ecology, and recreation.

#### A vision for the future

With focussed and coordinated development, the Major Events Precinct can become a celebratory, connected, and walkable district, with shaded tropical promenades, dining streets, urban living, and recreation spaces. A landscape and water-based spine of parks, paths and people places at its heart will link together the community recreation spaces in the precinct.



Figure 13. Major Events Precinct illustration



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### Regenerating the Major Events Precinct initiatives

With coordinated, targeted planning, investment and stakeholder collaboration, the Major Events Precinct can become a more engaging, accessible and activated urban setting.

While flood and storm tide inundation hazards currently limit development immediately adjacent to the sports and events facilities, there are ample development opportunities within easy walking distance of Barlow Park, the Showgrounds, and community recreation spaces.

To achieve the precinct vision the key initiatives are:

- **Natural hazards mitigation** - To unlock the redevelopment potential of sites currently subject to high hazard ratings.
- **A new dining and entertainment precinct** - A vibrant strip along Spence and Bunda Streets to complement major events, located in existing or new developments in lower flood-risk areas.
- **A major new spine of recreation, active transport and ecological rehabilitation** - Revitalisation of the Smiths Creek corridor, incorporating bank rehabilitation, parklets, and a new promenade and cycleway, and enhanced connections to sports fields and community destinations in the precinct. This includes integrating the place of 'Local Significance' drain into the redesign.
- **New accommodation & infill housing outside the high flood and storm tide inundation area** - Providing infill housing such as duplex, triplex, quadplexes and low scale apartments within existing residential areas, and some sports-related accommodation on larger sites. Major sites towards the city can, over time, transition to higher-intensity infill housing.

- **A connected & walkable precinct** - Creation of cool, shaded pedestrian links along Spence, Scott, Severin, and Aumuller Streets, improving accessibility between key destinations.
- **Catalytic development** - Strategic redevelopment of sites outside the high flood hazard area, with potential for revitalising existing businesses and attracting new investment; these are described overleaf.

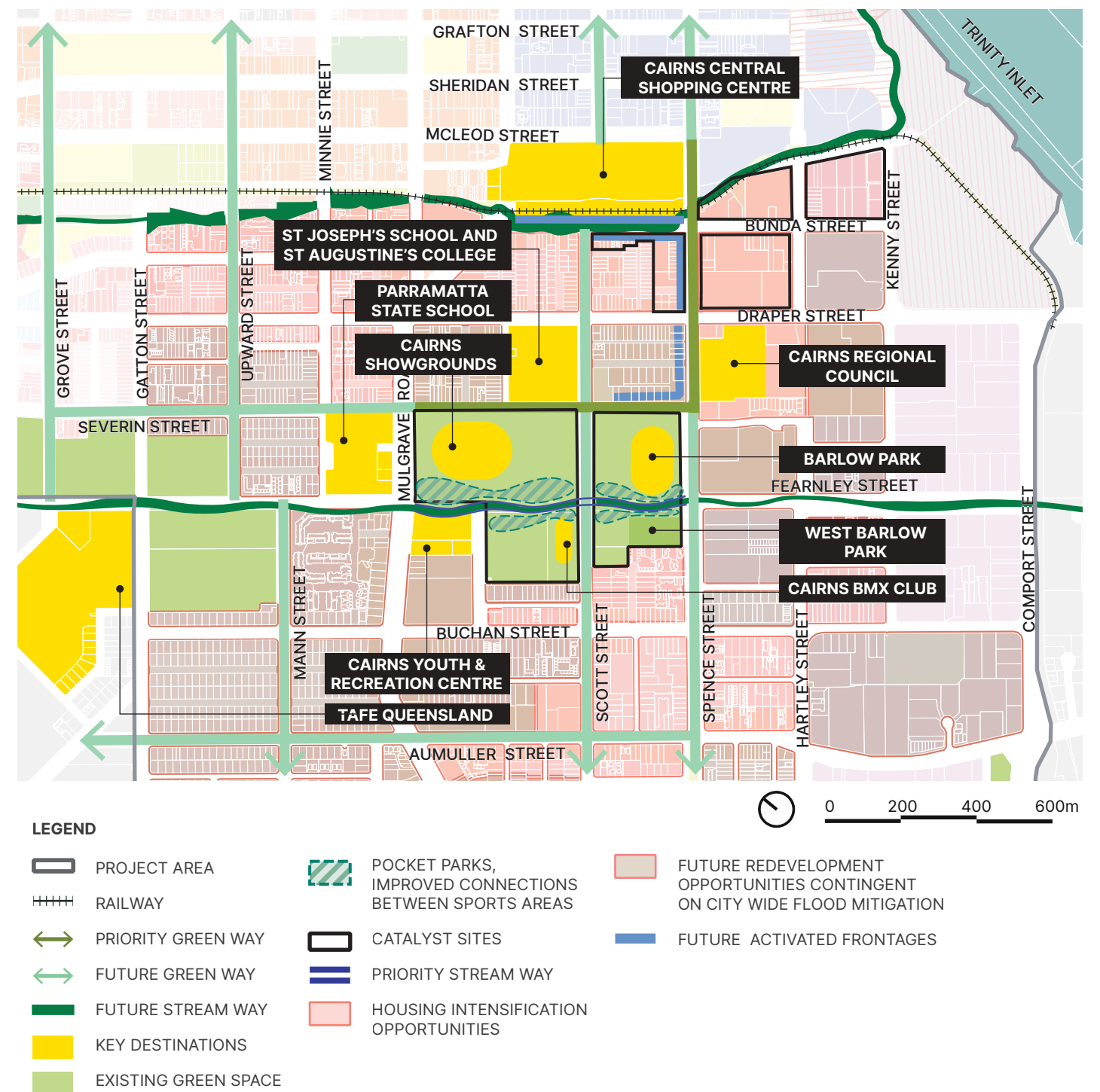


Figure 14. Major Events Precinct overview



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### Catalysing change: stitching the Major Events Precinct together

#### Catalyst site initiatives

To build activity and amenity in the precinct, it is important to focus on the elements that stitch the precinct together as a whole. Regeneration needs to occur through a strategic suite of initiatives encompassing public space revitalisation, catalyst site redevelopment and business activation.

The emerging Events Precinct Master Plan being undertaken in collaboration with CRC needs to be integrated with these priorities to achieve the crucial pedestrian links, public spaces and surrounding development that will drive precinct change.

Key initiatives to catalyse change are:

- **High-Intensity housing & mixed-use development** – for areas outside the high flood hazard area, larger sites can be unlocked for future residential and commercial growth.
- **Shaded promenade** – A new streetscape along Spence and Severin Streets, featuring interactive retail, a tropical tree-lined promenade, and improved pedestrian connectivity will strengthen the connection into the CBD. More detail is provided on this in section 3 of this report.
- **Retail & street activation** – With increased foot traffic along Spence and Severin Streets, adjacent retail offerings can be expanded to create a more interactive street. This could include food, sports, and entertainment-focused businesses that embrace outdoor dining, interactive storefronts, and event-based engagement.
- **Barlow Park arrival enhancements** – Upgraded pedestrian entries, internal pathways, and vehicle access, with a commitment to preserving mature vegetation particularly along Scott Street.

- **A major new spine of recreation, active transport and ecological rehabilitation** – Comprising a new shaded shared pathway along Smiths Creek, bank and waterway rehabilitation, linear parklets, and new connections between the precincts green spaces, this initiative stitches the precinct together. To deliver it will be critical to work with all precinct stakeholders to develop a coordinated landscape plan for the corridor to balance Showgrounds/Barlow Park operational requirements with the huge uplift to the city this initiative will provide.
- **Linear park & shared path network beyond the Barlow Park precinct** – Extending green space and pedestrian connectivity, continuing creek rehabilitation, and creating a linked urban park system. This includes potential future greening of Spence Street further west, particularly in current hot median areas, to create a cool shared pathway. More detail is provided on this in section 3 of this report.



#### Strategies

1. Renew bus station.
2. Future housing / mixed use site.
3. Create a shaded promenade.
4. Support street front revitalisation.
5. Support street front revitalisation and flood resilience.
6. Severin Street renewal, and can be closed for large events.
7. Barlow Park - renew pedestrian entries.
8. Barlow Park - renewed vehicle access while maintaining all mature vegetation.
9. Active transport corridor and pocket parks following rationalisation of operational zones.
10. Bank and waterway rehabilitation.
11. Enhanced connection to existing sports grounds.
12. Future continuation of shared path, creek rehabilitation and creation of liner parks.

Figure 15. Catalyst site

## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### 2.4 City Centre South Precinct

#### Context and potential

Cairns City Centre South is home to two major destinations that drive local tourism and economic activity: the Cairns Convention Centre, offering 45,000 sqm of event space, and the Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal, with 99 berthings scheduled for 2025 (source: Ports North) and growing in numbers..

Central Queensland University is developing a new 4,000 student campus at Grafton and Hartley Streets, and nearby Ports, Defence, training and marine sectors continue to grow.

However, connections between these attractions and the city centre lack shade, vibrancy, and amenity, limiting CBD businesses from fully benefiting. The precinct contains large vacant parcels of land with potential for tall mixed use residential buildings.

The precinct faces flood, storm tide and coastal erosion risks, requiring alignment with city-wide mitigation plans. While past redevelopment has been constrained by market conditions, future shifts and improved resilience measures could unlock the precinct's potential as a tropical hub, completing the 'city triangle' vision of the 2011 Cairns City Centre Master Plan.

#### A vision for the future

Through the redevelopment of key catalyst sites, a dynamic urban district can be created focusing on tropically green high-intensity housing, accommodation and mixed use with green streets and public spaces. With strong connections into the heart of the CBD, new tropical public spaces will bring the precinct to life and integrate key destinations into the city centre.

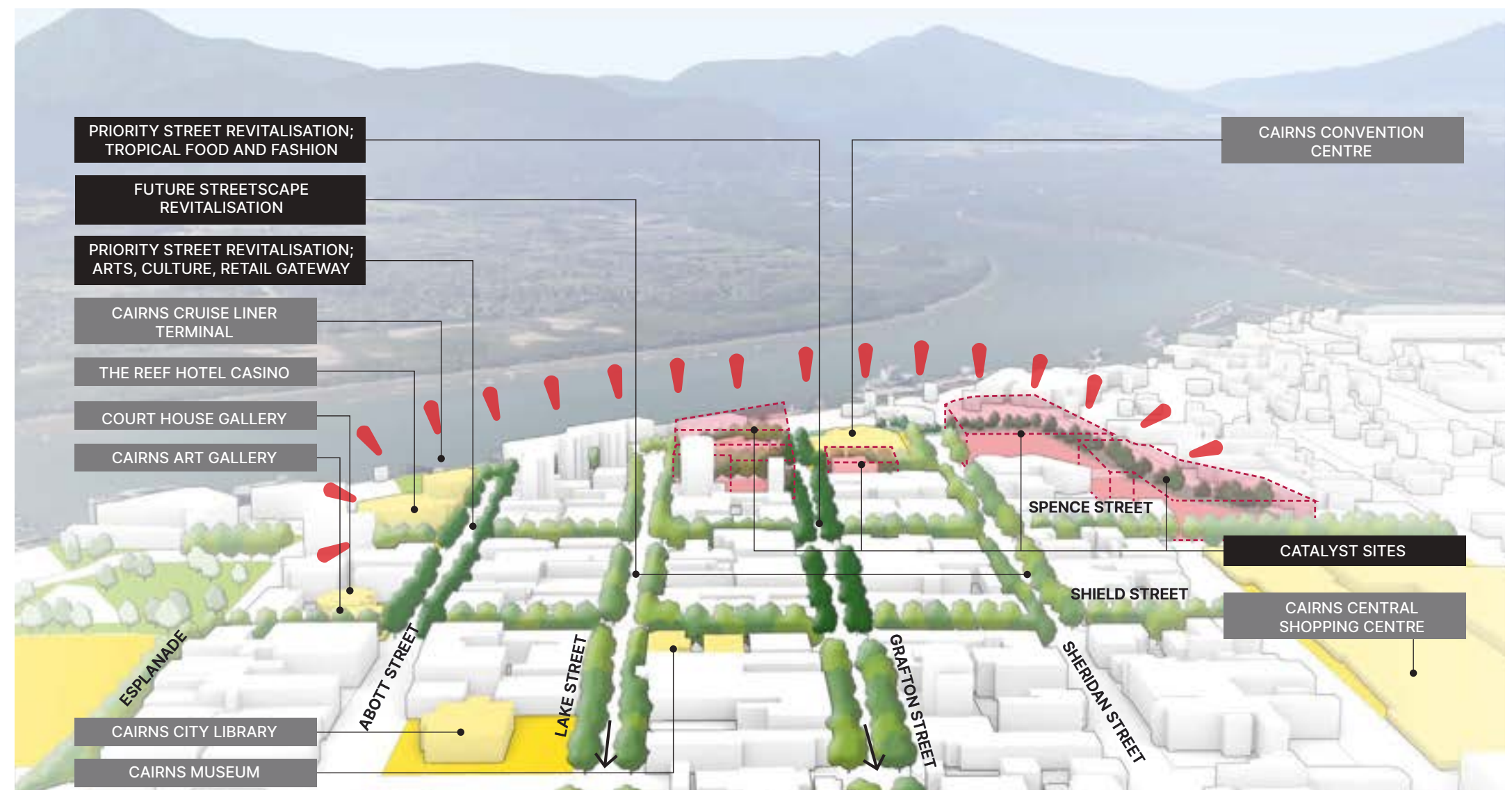


Figure 16. City Centre South Precinct illustration



## 2 Vibrant tropical hubs and neighbourhoods

### Regenerating the City South Precinct initiatives

To achieve the delivery of the City Centre South Precinct vision, the key initiatives are:

**Key initiatives:**

- **Natural hazards mitigation** - Longer term storm tide, flooding and coastal erosion mitigation will be critical to ensure the resilience of new development in the face of increased climate-related risks.
- **Collaborative planning across development sites** - The full potential of the precinct will only be realised through a collaborative and coordinated master planning effort between major landowners, including Ports North, Council and private stakeholders, to ensure a unified approach.
- **A focus on high rise visitor accommodation** - Long-term plans need to work towards a vision of a highly liveable, tropical urban environment that blends high-density tourist accommodation with lively retail and hospitality.
- **Ground level street activation** - Ensuring new development provides interactive frontages to key streets in the precinct will be a priority.
- **Temporary activation** - Temporary activation of underutilised spaces—including car parks, vacant lots, and empty shops—will be vital to bring life to the precinct while longer-term redevelopment plans are developed. This could include weekend markets, a Tropical Food and Fashion Festival, night time cinema on empty sites.

- **Streetscape enhancements** - The transformation needs to prioritise the creation of cool, green, and pedestrian-friendly streets, with an emphasis on Wharf, Abbott, Lake, Grafton, and Hartley Streets. In the short term, the focus will be on revitalising Grafton and Abbott Streets, which have the potential to become bustling hubs for retail, dining, and cultural experiences. More detail on streetscape initiatives is provided in the following chapter.

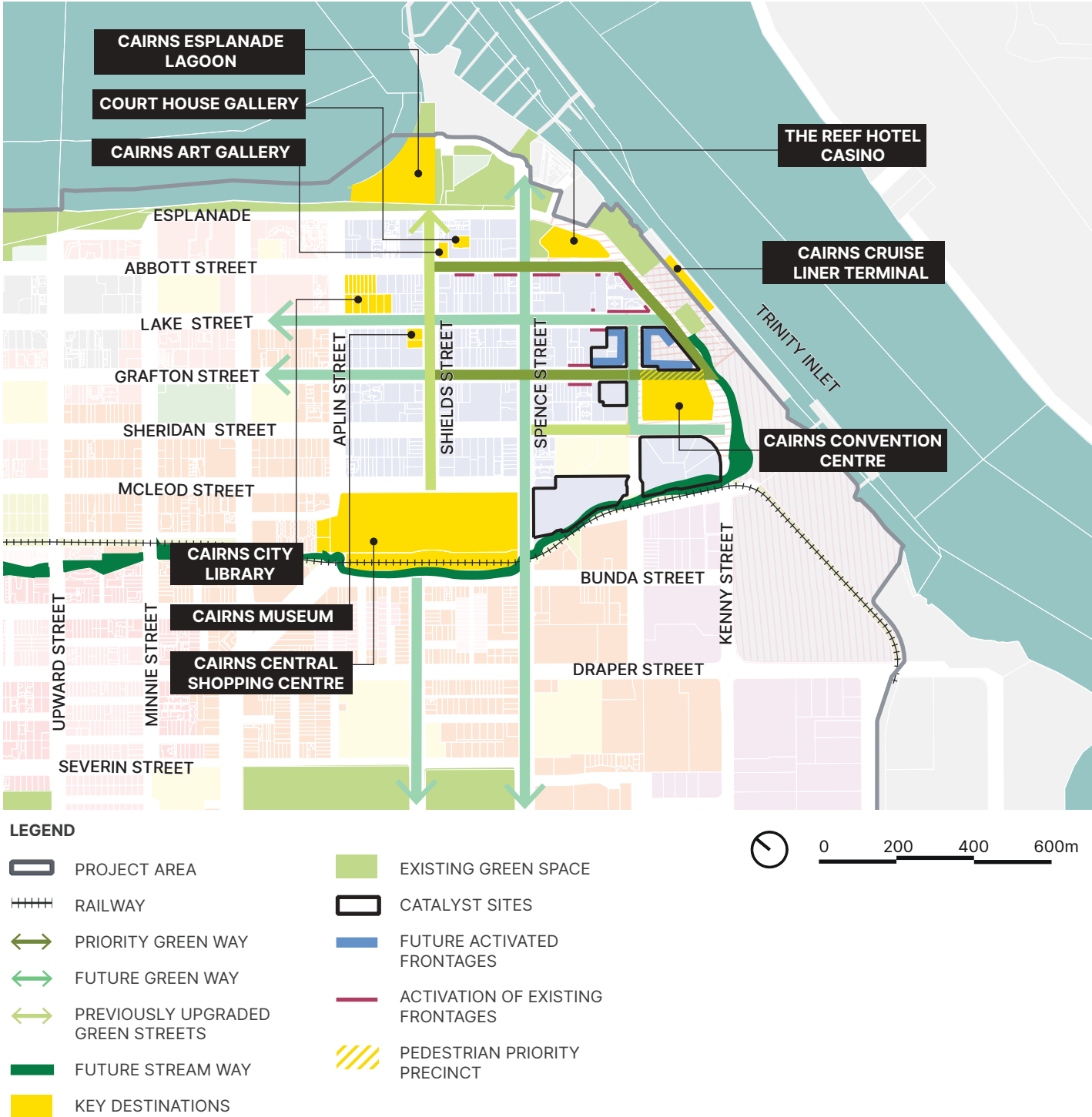


Figure 17. City Centre South Precinct overview

## 2 Vibrant Tropical Hubs and Neighbourhoods

### Catalysing change: City Centre South's hyper green highrise precinct

#### Catalyst site initiatives

Waterfront views, large sites and nearby visitor destinations make this an ideal precinct for the development of high-density housing and accommodation and mixed use over time. With collaborative master planning, this could be delivered as Cairns' first super-green tropically urban precinct, making it a unique destination in Australia and an attractor for Cairns.

In the future, the precinct needs to deliver:

- **Buildings with green podia, green verandas, lift lobbies** – accommodation and mixed use designed for the tropics. Lushly planted podia can be used as recreation decks and places to capture cool evening breezes. Tropical gardens can be incorporated into balconies and indoor/outdoor lift lobbies and façade gardens.
- **An extensive network of green spaces and ground and lower levels integrated into public, semi-public and semi-private spaces** - (e.g. recreation decks), creating a green “porous” urban landscape. This could include elevated green under crofts on low hazard inundation prone sites and green courtyards for less flood affected sites.
- **Create a green link to Lily Creek corridor** via shaded streets and easements, wherever possibly planting to further enhance the area's ecological and recreational values.
- **Streetscape revitalisation** - with focused investment, Grafton Street will evolve into a tropical food and fashion precinct while Abbott Street will be reinstated as the city's front door, featuring shopfront revitalisation, cultural connections, and enhanced greenery. More details on streetscape initiatives are included in section 3 of this report.



#### Strategies

1. New elevated multi-residential buildings with undercroft gardens as a flood resilience strategy, subject to flood engineering and mitigation. To ensure greening across the development, a requirement for an area of greening equal to twice the site area for the ground floor, podia, and balconies could be introduced.
2. Paved, tree lined street closed to traffic during events and festivals.
3. On ground development with green courtyards. To ensure greening across the development, a requirement for an area of greening equal to twice the site area for the ground floor, podia, and balconies could be introduced.
4. Future stream way extension.
5. As per 3, but with active frontage to Spence Street.

Figure 18. Catalyst site

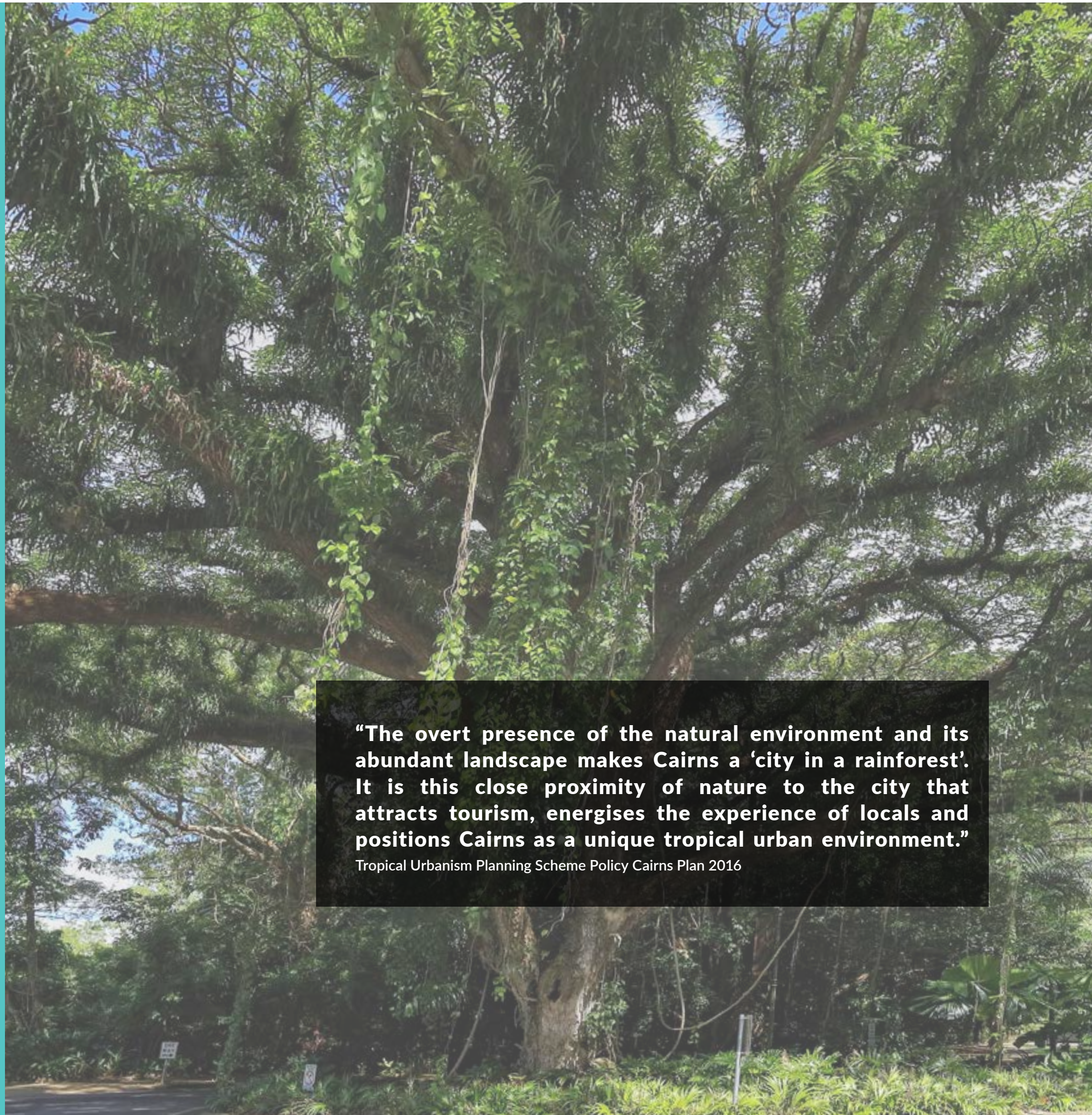


## Part B

Connectors:  
A lattice of cool  
green streets and  
public spaces

**“The overt presence of the natural environment and its abundant landscape makes Cairns a ‘city in a rainforest’. It is this close proximity of nature to the city that attracts tourism, energises the experience of locals and positions Cairns as a unique tropical urban environment.”**

Tropical Urbanism Planning Scheme Policy Cairns Plan 2016





### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.1 Connectors overview

##### Context and potential

A major attraction of inner-city living is the ability to be able to walk to work, and walk between key services and facilities. In addition, with increased residential density comes the need to increase access to green space for the health and well-being of people living in apartments or dwellings with minimal gardens.

Heat mapping shows that people walking in central Cairns in the middle of hot days or heat waves experience dangerously high temperatures in and alongside the city’s wide road corridors of bitumen.

There is growing scientific understanding of the critical role increased urban tree canopy can play in cooling cities, and a growing demand for councils to set urban tree canopy targets for keeping urban environments safe for inhabitants on hot days and during heatwaves.

To support the regeneration of central Cairns, we need to make cool, shaded streetscapes that connect people and the destinations of central Cairns. Cairns’ wide streets can accommodate generous new shade plantings and footpath improvements to create the network of walking ‘arteries and veins’ that people need to use.

Cairns’ ‘drains’, or creek corridors; Smiths Creek, Lily Creek and others (e.g. Brown Street and Boland Street drains) have huge untapped potential as green connectors and recreation resources in central Cairns. Smiths Creek and Lily Creek both run through both parkland and residential areas, and straddle the entire central Cairns area. These corridors need to be revitalised as critical active transport links and greenspace resources for a growing population.

##### Initiatives

A comprehensive network of cool shaded streets is essential for central Cairns, to reduce heat island effect, improve health and reduce car dependence for a growing population. As more opportunities are provided for people to live in central Cairns, it is vital to be able to move around in shade, and have access to excellent green space. We need to make a comprehensive network, or lattice, of cool green streets and public spaces across the city centre.

It is an ambitious, but essential longer-term undertaking that will be achieved through the development of three key elements:

**Green Ways**

Shaded streets that link key destinations in the city centre.

**Stream Ways**

Regenerated ‘drains’ and creeks as vital green recreation and connection corridors through the city.

**Community Ways**

Localised, community-based projects that will cool, shade and improve ecologies in the city centre.

More detail about each of these three ‘layers’ of city greening is included in the following pages.

There has been strong support from stakeholders for the idea of city-wide planting.

It is noted that these improved active transport links need to be coordinated with improved public transport. During design hub discussions, stakeholders have voiced the urgent need to provide improved public transport to and around the city centre. We strongly recommend that public transport concepts are investigated as part of the implementation of this Project.

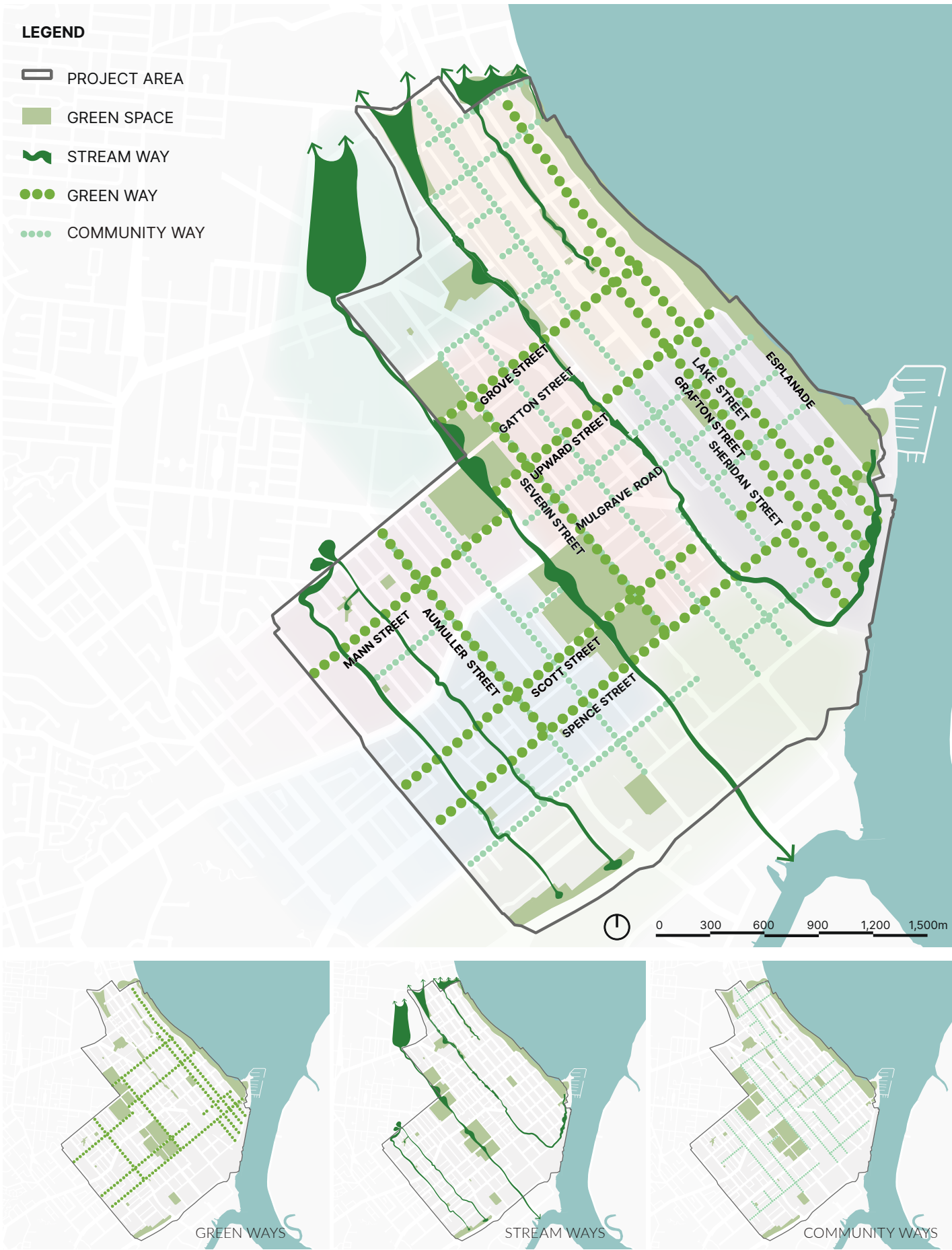


Figure 19. Green streets and spaces network plans



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.2 Green Ways - Green arteries for active travel and urban cooling

##### Context and potential

Green Ways will form the primary pedestrian and active travel routes in central Cairns, designed to improve connectivity, enhance walkability, and create a cooler, environment that is more resilient to the urban heat island effect. These key corridors link major precincts, supporting access to services, facilities and key destinations for the growing population of Cairns.

The Green Ways network comprises:

**Scott and Spence Streets** – Connecting the Major Events Precinct to the CBD and southwest suburbs.

**Grove and Upward Streets** – Linking the Health Precinct with residential areas and TAFE.

**Lake and Grafton Streets** – Connecting the Health Precinct to the CBD and City Centre South Precinct.

Each Green Way will be designed to provide a high-quality urban experience, with extensive tropical street tree planting for shade and cooling, footpath upgrades to improve accessibility and pedestrian comfort, dedicated active transport routes for cyclists and pedestrians, and enhanced lighting and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) measures to improve safety.

Given the scale of the Green Ways network, delivery will occur in stages. Investment in streetscape upgrades must be strategically aligned with areas undergoing major redevelopment to maximise impact. The highest recommended projects focus on integrating with precinct regeneration strategies to drive transformation in three key precincts. These comprise:

- Health Precinct Green Ways recommended projects focussing on Lake, Grove, Gatton, and Upward Streets.
- Major Events Precinct Green Ways recommended projects focussing on a shaded promenade on Spence and Severin Streets.
- City Centre South Green Ways recommended projects focussing on Grafton and Abbott Streets.

Details of each of these recommended Green Way proposals is provided in the following pages.



Figure 20. Plan of Green Ways



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.3 Health Precinct recommended Green Way project - Creating a safer, greener, and more accessible Health Precinct

##### Context and potential

The Cairns Health Precinct houses vitally important services to the community of Cairns, and has enormous potential to be a more lively, greener, healthier place.

As a major magnet it has high pedestrian traffic, including patients, staff, and visitors. However poor lighting, insufficient pedestrian crossings, hot and exposed streets, and localised flooding create challenges for safe and comfortable movement. High parking demand further contributes to the busy-ness of the area.

Fortunately, there is ample area within the current street and footpath alignments to accommodate more shade tree planting and wider footpaths. With local traffic already moving at slow speeds due to the number of drop-offs and cars manoeuvring, there is strong opportunity to increase the number and amenity of pedestrian crossings, and enhance how people move through the precinct, including by scooters. Importantly, these pedestrian enhancements will facilitate connection between new housing and places of work. Through these streetscape enhancements, the precinct can become a cool, green, more pedestrian friendly precinct with improved safety—importantly without reducing localised on-street parking capacity which is in high demand.

The streetscape improvements described on the following page will support the broader transformation of the Health Precinct, working in concert with new housing and mixed-use developments, to create a healthier, more walkable, and high-amenity environment for all who live, work, and visit the precinct.



Image 8. Lake Street (existing condition)



Image 7. Lake Street artistic impression



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Recommended project initiatives



Figure 21. Proposed streetscape (showing indicative kerb lines)



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces



Figure 22. Proposed streetscape (showing indicative vegetation)



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

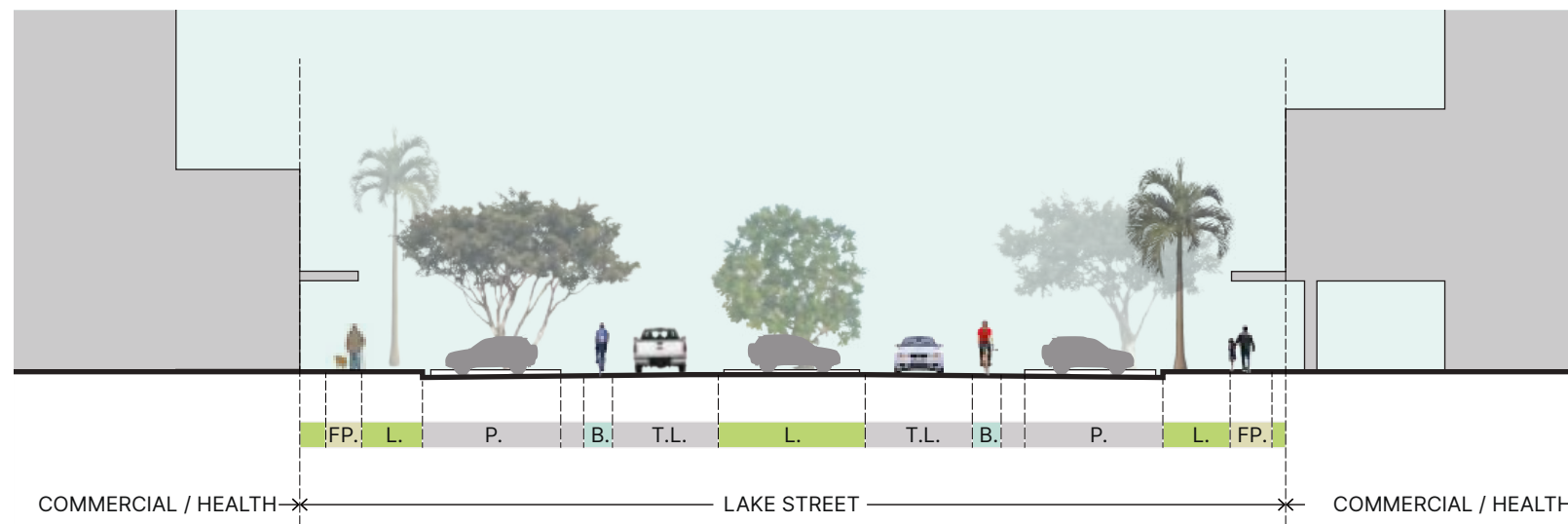


Figure 23. Existing Lake Street section

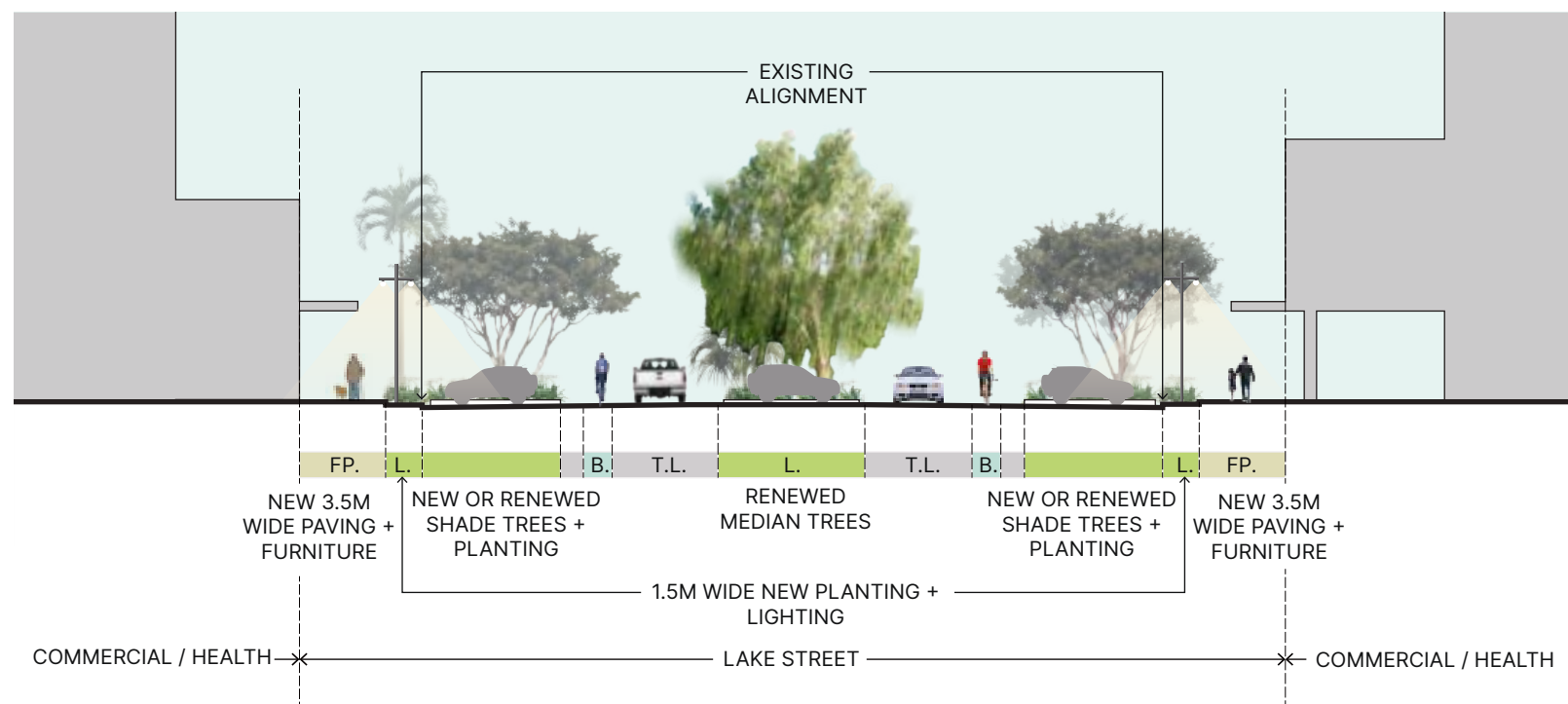


Figure 24. Proposed Lake Street section

### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Planting concept

The Health Precinct is a place of care, where trees are selected not just for beauty, but for their role in creating a therapeutic setting – offering shade, cleansing air, and holding stories of resilience and renewal. Species like the Freshwater Mangrove and Silk Handkerchief Tree create cool, shaded areas that invite rest and reflection, while plants such as the Little Evodia and Tuckeroo enhance the environment with fragrance and links to natural remedies. The Cassowary Pine and Weeping Paperbark further enrich the precinct with their traditional uses in pain relief and wound treatment, blending beauty with purpose. Vibrant flowering species like the Paluma Range Cassia bring a sense of renewal and joy to the landscape. Medians act as visual focal points, while the verges provide both aesthetic appeal and contribute to urban cooling and greening, with lush understory supporting creatures great and small.



Image 9. Weeping Paperbark  
(Tatters, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tgerus/50439217123/in/photolist-2ddwQnS-2jR9aYx-23EmMNC-4mYPvH-7mq4k3-7mq4py-4n36Jj-4n354o-4mXwN4-2EDeVZ-2iwBXy8-2iwBY15-2EDoB6-8xJDUX-6VJNfs-7ZGKvV-7ZGJSM-NsRXZY-7ZGLo8-7ZGJGk-22CtuKC-22CtwJ7-22Ctyss-2qWFqPx-2oXv92T>)



Image 11. Tuckeroo



Image 10. Cassowary Pine  
(<https://handwiki.org/wiki/index.php?curid=1454806>)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Barringtonia calypttrata</i>	Cassowary Pine	Poultices made from leaves or bark can be used for pain relief or skin ailments. The plant has fish stunning properties with seeds which can be used to temporarily paralyse fish, a practice known in the Torres Strait.
<i>Cassia paluma Range</i>	Paluma Range Cassia	Displays vibrant yellow flowers bringing a sense of joy, optimism, and renewal.
<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i>	Weeping Paperbark	Displays white flowers. To be planted in clusters. Leaves can be used for treating colds and wounds; bark can be used in wrapping food and medicinal poultices. Deeply connected to cleansing and healing, both in terms of its cultural uses and its natural characteristics.
<i>Maniltoa lenticillata</i>	Silk Handkerchief Tree	With its broad, dense form, it offers cool, shaded spaces for walking and sitting.
<i>Melicope rubra</i>	Little Evodia	The genus was traditionally used for treating coughs, colds, and skin infections. Its aromatic leaves often signal healing properties.
<i>Cupaneopsis anarcoides</i>	Tuckeroo	Leaves and bark may have been used in infusions for general wellness, enhancing the connection with traditional healing.
<i>Barringtonia acutangula</i>	Freshwater Mangrove	The plant can be used as an antiseptic, and in some regions, for treating skin conditions and fevers. Its broad canopy provides comfortable dappled shade, inviting walking, sitting, and slowing down.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.4 Major Events Precinct recommended Green Way project - Linking the CBD and the Major Events Precinct

##### Context and potential

With upcoming 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games-related investments in Barlow Park and surrounding areas, there is a significant opportunity to create a more compelling, safer and cooler connection between the city's dining, accommodation, and entertainment precincts and its key event venues.

The walking environment between the Cairns CBD and the Major Events Precinct is hot, exposed, and lacks activation, making it an uninviting route for visitors and locals moving between the city and Barlow Park. Spence and Severin Streets need to be revitalised as a sports themed shaded promenade to form a major pedestrian artery between the CBD and events venues, linking two vital economic activity hubs.

The creation of a cool, walkable, engaging streetscape on Spence and Severin Streets will in turn support the activation shopfronts and local businesses, transforming Spence and Severin Streets into lively, shaded tropical promenades.

A new 6.5m-wide shaded promenade along Spence Street proposed, to link the Events Precinct to the city via a shaded and tropically unique environment. Severin Street should also be upgraded as a people friendly and festive entrance precinct by establishing a 4.5m-wide tropically shaded promenade and arrival spaces, ensuring connectivity between Spence Street and the event precinct. Details of both are provided in the following pages.



Image 13. Spence Street (existing condition)



Image 12. Spence Street artistic impression



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Recommended project initiatives



Figure 25. Proposed streetscape (showing indicative kerb lines)

#### Spence Street – the shaded promenade

- Footpath widening by 1.5m, creating a comfortable and spacious walkway.
- Double rows of tropical shade trees, forming a formal 'processional' avenue for cooling and visual appeal.
- Tree pits integrated into paving, maximising walkable space while maintaining greenery.
- New public art and improved signage to enhance wayfinding and visitor experience.
- Upgraded lighting, including festive lighting to create a vibrant evening atmosphere.
- Improved pedestrian crossings for enhanced safety and accessibility.
- Renewed footpaths and new shady street trees along the northern side of the street.
- New street furniture in alignment with the City in a Rainforest Master Plan.
- Traffic lanes, parking, and the central median to be retained, with minor realignments subject to survey verification.

#### Severin Street – the shaded promenade and entry precinct

- Footpath widening by 4m on the western side to allow for greater pedestrian movement and tree planting.
- Deep plantings on both sides of the street, providing much-needed shade.
- Retention of 90-degree parking and two lanes of traffic, ensuring minimal disruption to operations long term.
- New public art, signage, and festive lighting to create a dynamic and inviting streetscape.
- Upgraded street furniture to enhance public amenity.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces



Figure 26. Proposed streetscape (showing indicative vegetation)



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

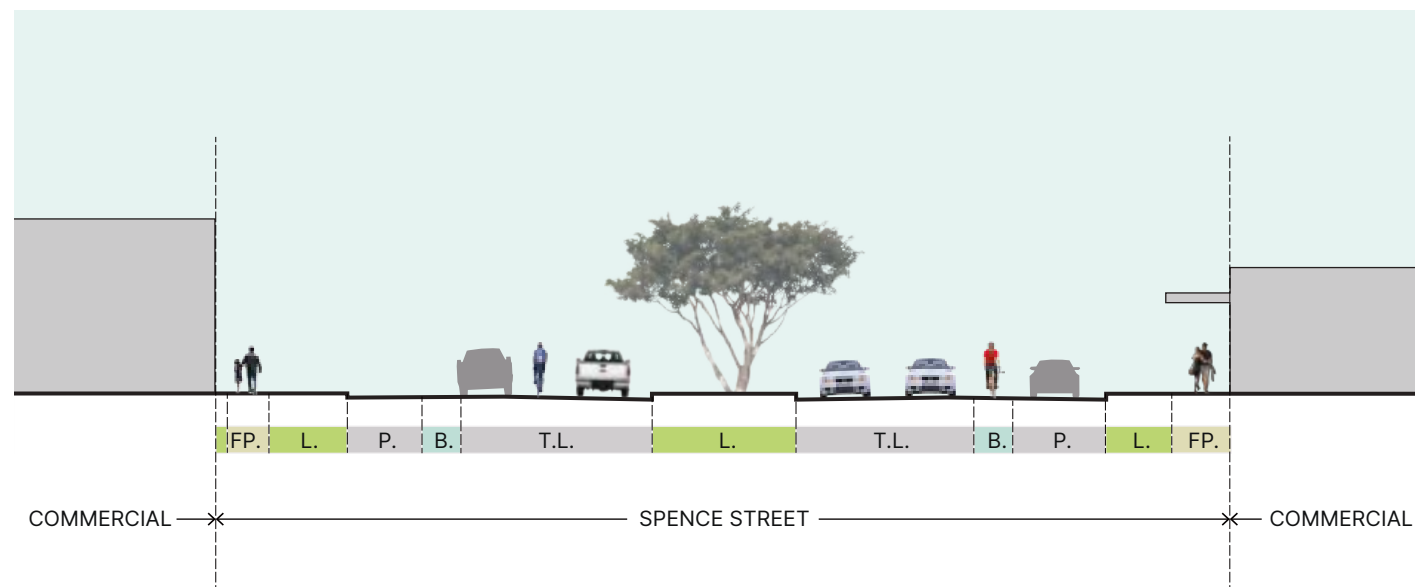


Figure 27. Existing Spence Street section

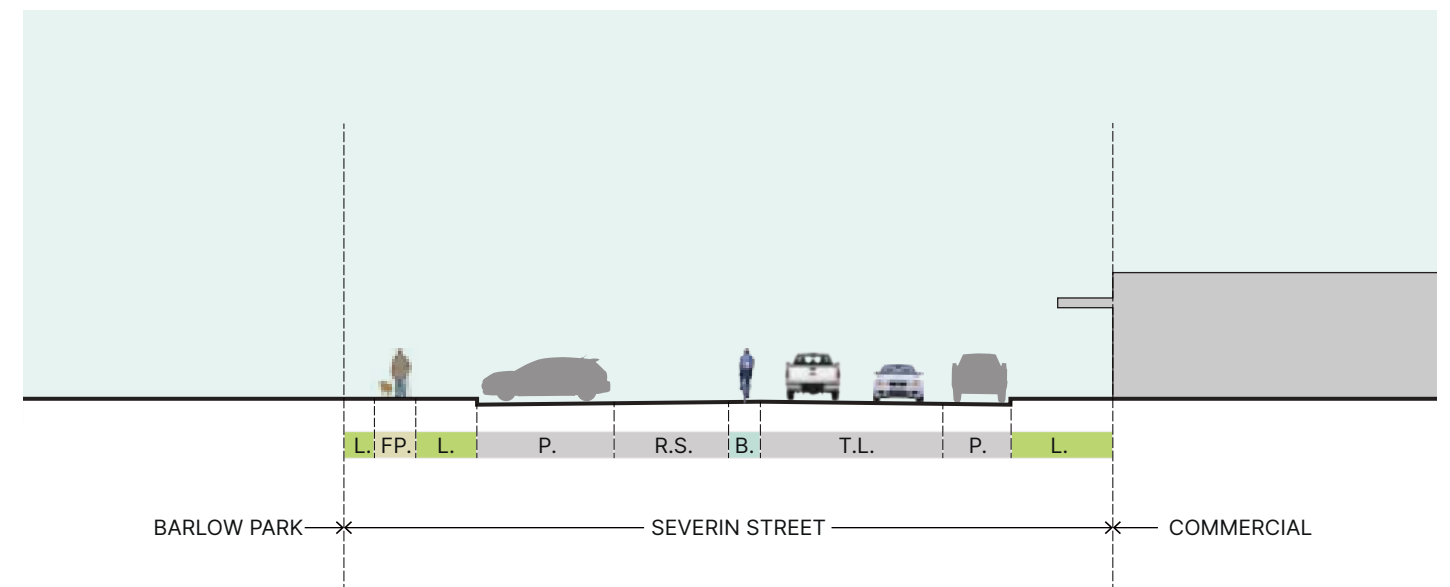


Figure 28. Existing Severin Street section

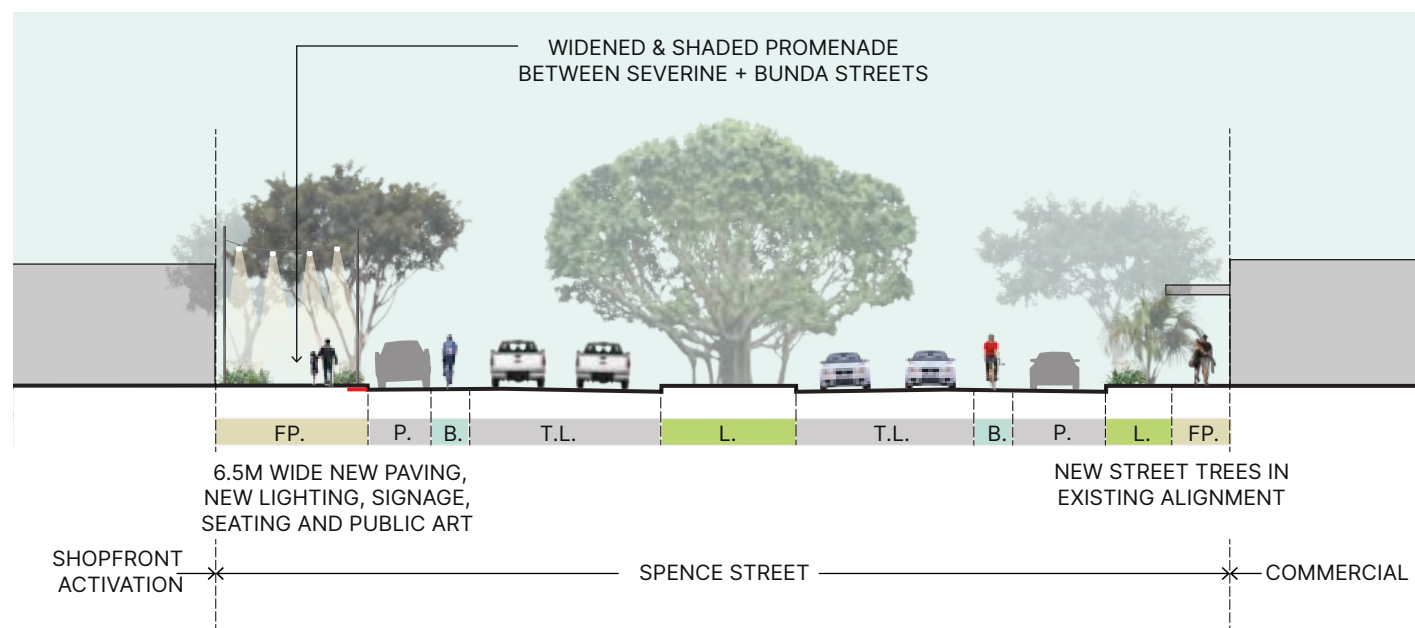


Figure 29. Proposed Spence Street section

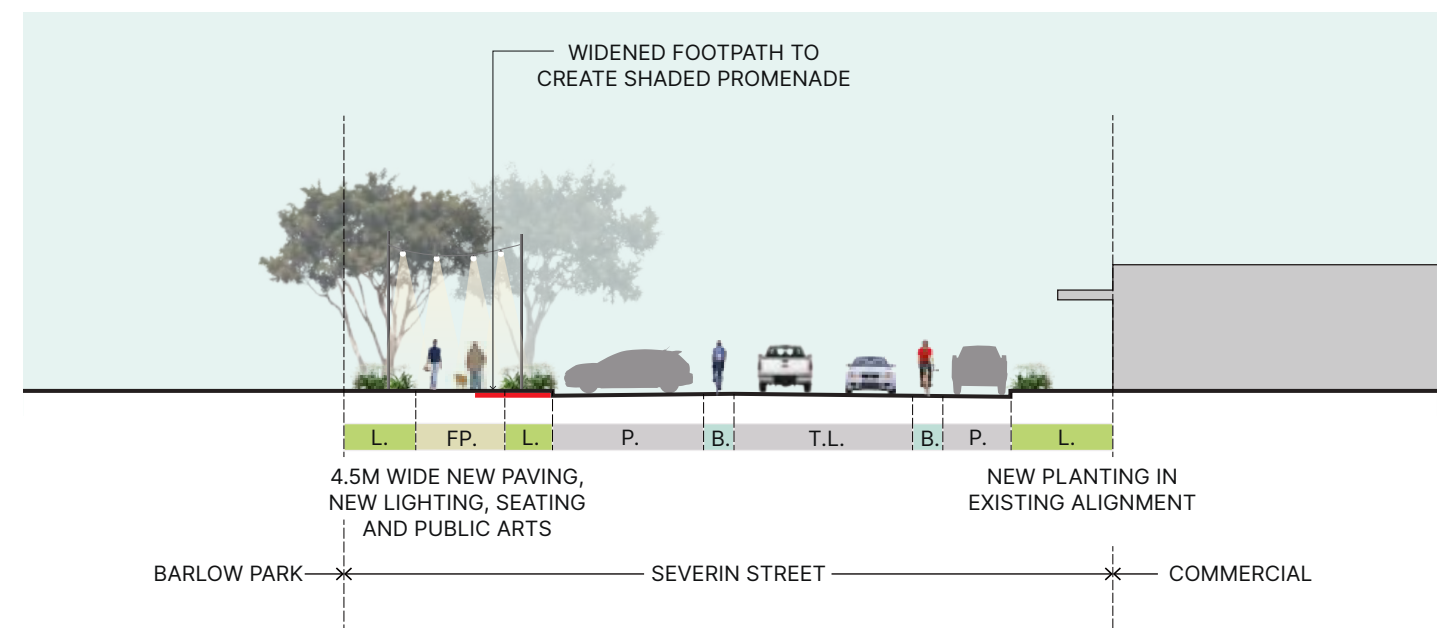


Figure 30. Proposed Severin Street section

**LEGEND**

P.	PARKING	L.	LANDSCAPING
B.	BIKE LANE	FP.	FOOTPATH
T.L.	TRAFFIC LANES	R.S.	ROAD SHOULDER



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Planting concept

Within the Major Events Precinct, Spence Street traces a symbolic path from the former freshwater spring at Bunda Street to the tidal creek at Fearnley Street, where the land once breathed with flood and tide. The tree palette has been selected to reflect themes of movement, resilience, and seasonal flow, grounding the precinct in memory and celebration. Medians evoke the shifting nature of water, with species like the Tamanu, Swamp Box, and Red Beech symbolizing strength, adaptability, and deep-rooted connections to flood-prone environments. Traditionally used in shipbuilding, the Tamanu now serves as a visual anchor in the landscape, reinforcing the narrative of movement and resilience. Along the verges, the Broad-leaved Paperbark and Silk Handkerchief Tree echo the gentle flow of water, while thriving in sometimes saturated soils of the area. The Kanuka Box, with its fragrant yellow blooms in summer, reminds visitors of water’s quiet, persistent presence and the rhythm of seasonal change. Together, these plantings and design elements celebrate the continuous flow of people, culture, and nature through the space.



Image 14. Tamanu  
(T.Harley, via Territory Native Plants, <https://www.territorynativeplants.com.au/calophyllum-inophyllum-beauty-leaf>)



Image 15. Broad-leaved Paperbark  
(Forest and Kim Starr, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/starr-environmental/>)



Image 16. Red Beech  
(Tatters, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tgerus/54439991526/in/photolist-2qWGbaJ-f3oQZS-2qWfLH-q3Qskn-aj2Jce-2qWfPy-2qWfPx-qWh9RS-pZ27TV>)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i>	Tamanu	Decorative shade tree with fragrant flowers. Traditionally used in shipbuilding.
<i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i>	Swamp Box	Fast growing, bee & butterfly attracting. Naturally grows along creeks and floodplain edges, making it a strong symbol of resilience and adaptation to seasonal flow.
<i>Dillenia alata</i>	Red Beech	Displays white flowers and has medicinal uses. To be planted in clusters. It is suitable to flood-prone areas. Tree is native to riparian and wet sclerophyll forests and thrives in wet soils.
<i>Melaleuca quinquinervia</i>	Broad-leaved Paperbark	Displays iconic unfurling of soft white new leaves—like hanging handkerchiefs. Tree is native to swamps, floodplains, and riverbanks.
<i>Maniltoa lenticillata</i>	Silk Handkerchief Tree	Three thrives in moist, sheltered environments. The slow-unfurling leaves and their layered form symbolise the quiet emergence of water at the source.
<i>Tristaniopsis exiliflora</i>	Kanuka Box	Displays fragrant yellow flowers. Grows where water lingers quietly—along creeks and rainforest edges, where flow is gentle and steady.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.5 City Centre South Precinct recommended Green Way project (Abbott Street) - Creating a new culture boulevard

##### Context and potential

Abbott Street is home to significant arts and culture institutions and is a short walk to the major Esplanade attractions. It also serves as a primary gateway into the CBD for cruise ship visitors. In previous years, the street thrived as a vibrant retail hub centred around the visitor economy. However, shifts in the retail landscape have contributed to a noticeable decline in retail activity, particularly at the southern end of the street.

The section of Abbott Street between Wharf and Shields Street, as one of the first streets seen by thousands of visitors disembarking in Cairns, currently does not leave a positive impression. With limited shade, several empty shops, some blank facades, a prominent central carpark portal there is significant room for improvement.

A combined suite of streetscape enhancements and activation strategies are needed to bring this important stretch of the CBD to life. Abbott Street can be restored as a welcoming gateway to the city through streetscape works and activation strategies to cooler, livelier, more inviting and culturally engaging destination.



Image 18. Abbott Street (existing condition)

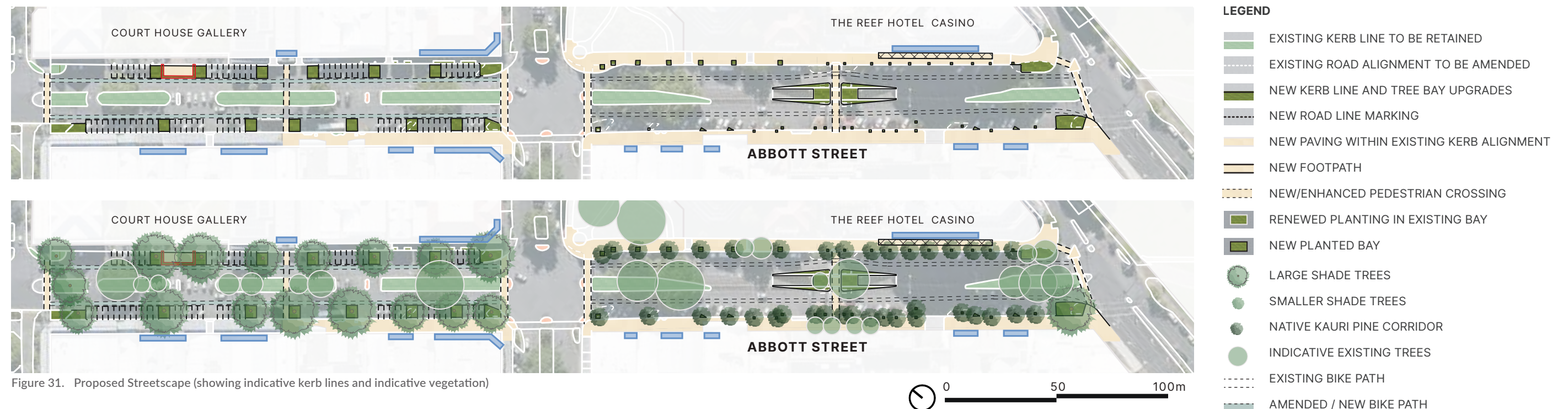


Image 17. Abbott Street artistic impression



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Recommended project initiatives



#### Key initiatives:

##### From Wharf Street to Shields Street:

- Renewed footpath paving to match the Cairns Gallery precinct, improving visual continuity.
- New street lighting to enhance safety and atmosphere.
- Updated street furniture in alignment with the City in a Rainforest Master Plan.
- Public art installations which interpret important local cultural themes.
- Investigation of timing of signalised crossings to prioritise pedestrians.
- Engaging with property owners to encourage pop-up enterprises and creative uses of empty spaces, boosting activation.
- Interweaving new public art linking to Abbott Street's cultural destinations.

##### Between Wharf Street and Spence Street:

- Rows of Kauri Pines to give the street a stronger presence and enhance shading.
- A large-scale outdoor gallery on the blank façade of the Cairns Casino, showcasing local artists.
- Greening of the carpark portal to reduce its visual dominance.
- Retention of existing on-street parking.

##### Between Spence Street and Shields Street:

- New shade trees in the road reserve to cool the streetscape, improving pedestrian comfort, accommodated by moving from 60-degree to 90-degree parking similar to other CBD streets.
- A newly planted build-out aligned with the Cairns Courthouse Gallery forecourt, providing shaded seating and a welcoming public space.
- A newly planted build-out aligned with the Cairns Courthouse Gallery forecourt, providing shaded seating and a welcoming public space, including incorporating acknowledgment of the previous fig tree in the forecourt, which was a meeting place for Cairns' First Nations community.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

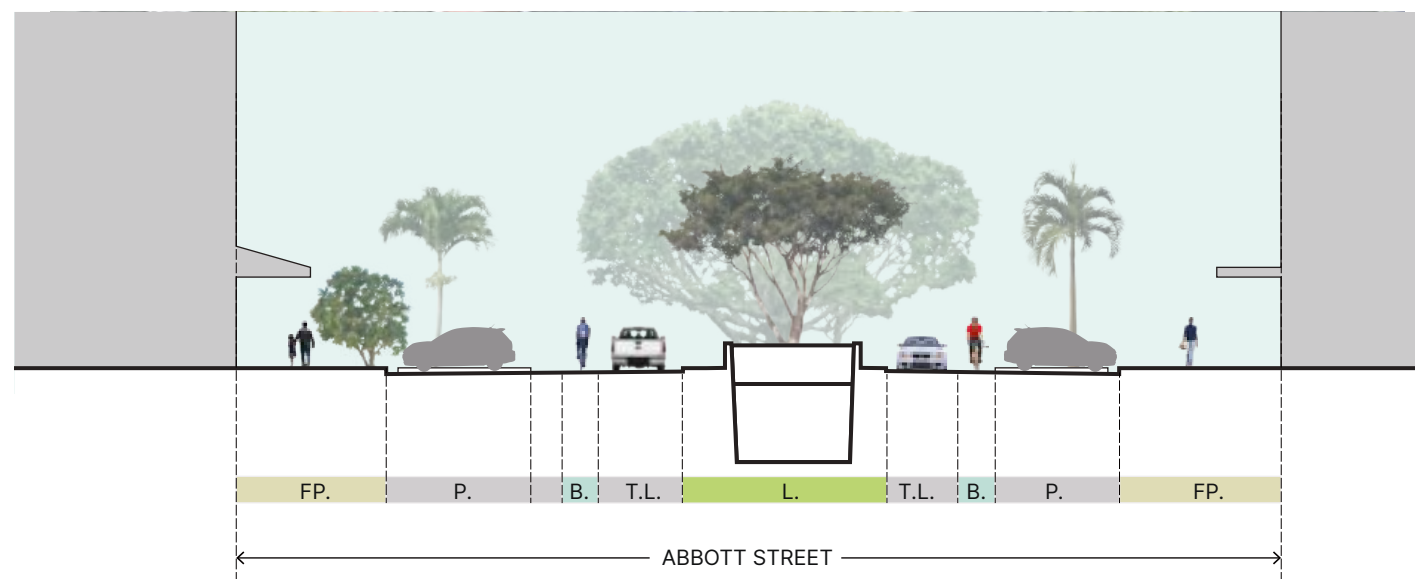


Figure 32. Existing Abbott Street section (between Spence Street and Wharf Street)



Figure 33. Existing Abbott Street section (between Shield Street and Spence Street)

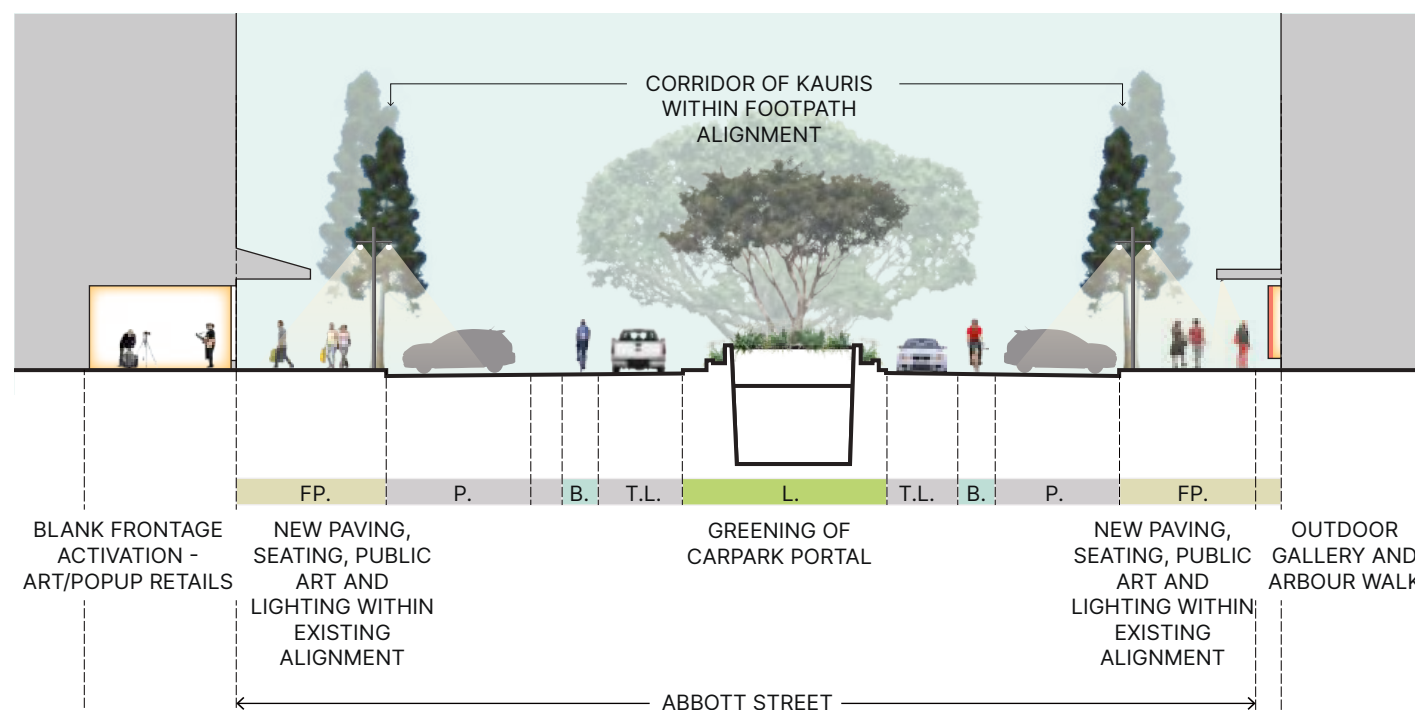


Figure 34. Proposed Abbott Street section (between Spence Street and Wharf Street)

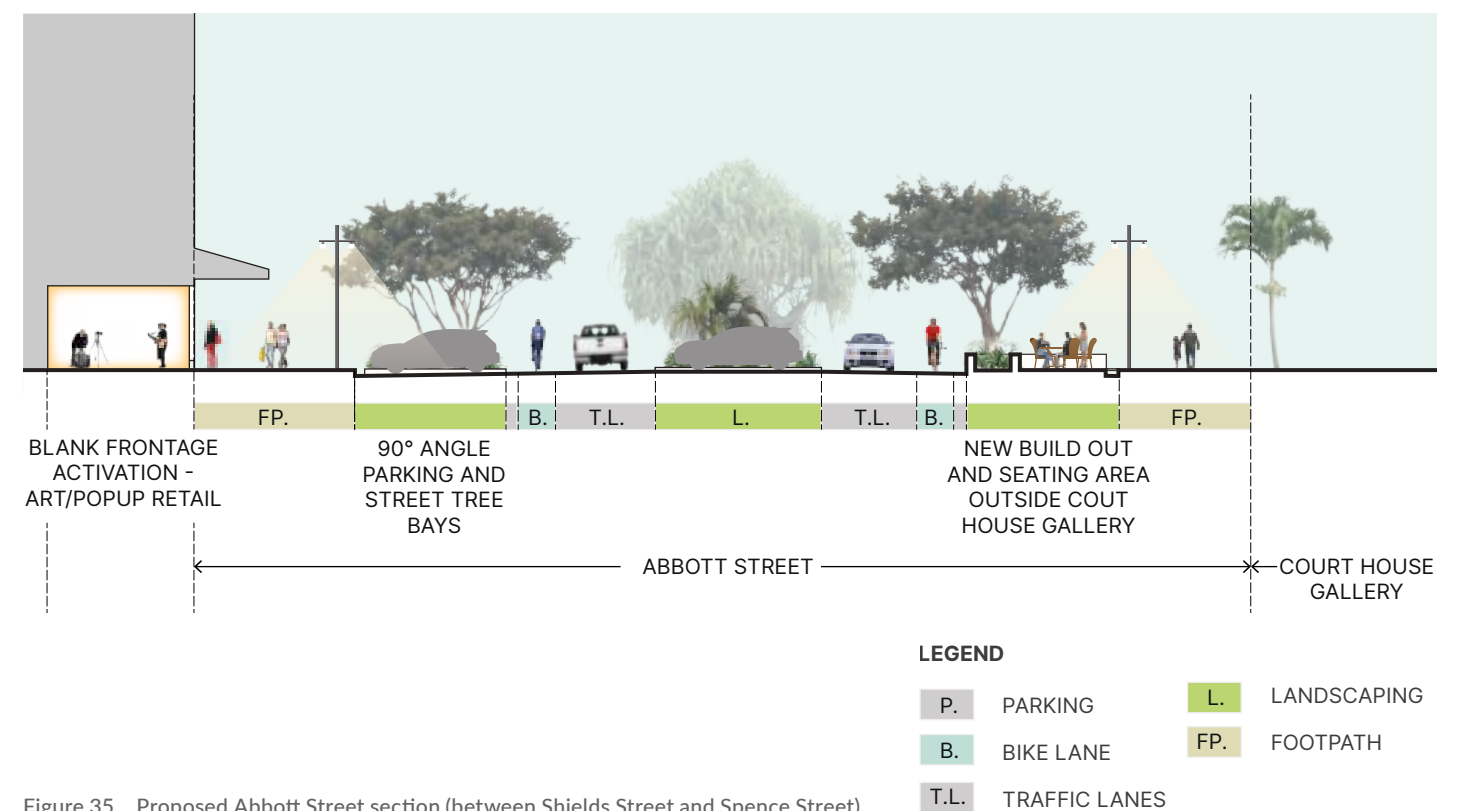


Figure 35. Proposed Abbott Street section (between Shields Street and Spence Street)



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Planting concept

Along Abbott Street in the City South Precinct, the tree palette has been thoughtfully selected to complement the high-density urban setting, creating a welcoming landscape amid the surrounding high-rise buildings. Streets section adjacent Wharf Street features the tall and formal Kauri Pine (or similar columnar tree), whose strong vertical form establishes a symbolic entry corridor into Cairns. Further north, verge plantings reflect the compact nature of the precinct, with upright species like the Eumundi Quandong and Wallaby Wireless Tree echoing the vertical rhythm of the built environment while introducing texture and bursts of seasonal colour. The Wallaby Wireless Tree adds further vibrancy with its bright yellow blooms, subtly reinforcing the precinct’s evolving identity as a cultural and event destination. The Illawarra Flame Tree contributes seasonal drama with its vivid red flowers and sculptural form, offering striking contrast and softening the urban edge. These plantings break up the hard surfaces, bringing warmth and character to the streetscape. Together, they enrich the visual experience and gently soften the existing built fabric of the city.



Image 19. Kauri Pine  
(Tatters, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tgerus/>)



Image 20. Illawarra Flame Tree



Image 21. Wallaby Wireless Tree  
(Purdie, via Atlas of Living Australia <https://biocache.ala.org.au/occurrences/403c6286-db82-4784-a90b-523eaaade201>)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Agathis robusta</i>	Kauri Pine	Proposed to be planted between Spence Street and Wharf Street. Tree has an upright form and formal structure, providing a strong visual anchor within a high-density environment.
<i>Brachychiton acerifolia</i>	Illawarra Flame Tree	Currently planted along Abbott Street. Displays striking flowers and a sculptural trunk, adding identity and contrast to the built form edges, reflecting the diverse character of civic life. It brings a sense of joy, optimism, and renewal.
<i>Elaeocarpus eumundi</i>	Eumundi Quandon	Tree has an upright and compact form, reflecting the vertical rhythm of the precinct while adding colour and texture.
<i>Deplanchea tetraphylla</i>	Wallaby Wireless Tree	Tree's bold golden flower clusters and upright form add value to the high-density environment.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.6 City Centre South Precinct recommended Green Way project (Grafton Street) - Creating a new gateway to the CBD

##### Context and potential

Grafton Street is a key retail and hospitality corridor within Cairns City Centre South, connecting directly to the Cairns Convention Centre. The street currently supports very 'Cairns' local fashion and food businesses, particularly between Spence and Shields Streets. However, the eastern end, closer to Hartley Street, remains underdeveloped, dominated by large car parks and lacking in active street-level interaction.

Grafton Street has the potential to be an even stronger, uniquely Cairns food and fashion precinct, a destination for locals, with an even greater number of bespoke local businesses, laneways, and recognition of its Chinese cultural history. To enhance Grafton Street's function as an active and attractive retail destination while maintaining car parking numbers, targeted improvements are needed. These initiatives need to focus on increasing shade and green, improving pedestrian comfort, and activating underutilised spaces to support a more vibrant and engaging streetscape.

The following pages describe initiatives to create a more pedestrian-friendly, shaded, and activated urban environment while consolidating Grafton Street's function as a unique local retail and hospitality hub.



Image 22. Grafton Street artistic impression



Image 23. Grafton Street (existing condition)



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Recommended project initiatives

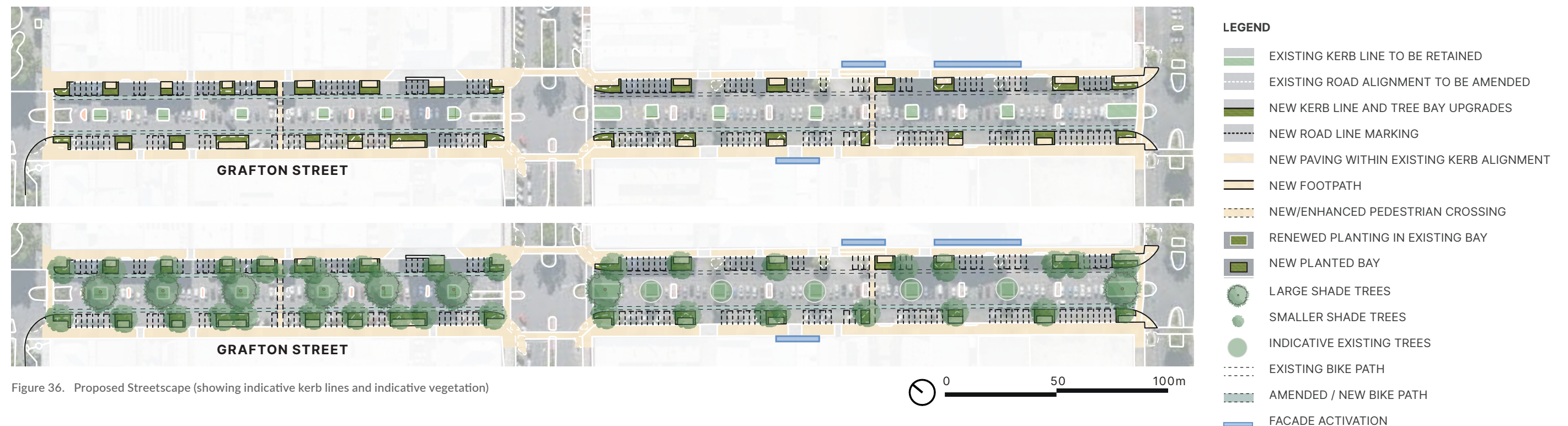


Figure 36. Proposed Streetscape (showing indicative kerb lines and indicative vegetation)

#### Key initiatives:

##### New build-outs:

- Adjust parking layout from 60-degree to 90-degree.
- Reduce carriageway to one lane on the western side (between Hartley and Spence Streets) and both sides (between Shields and Spence Streets).
- The two above changes reclaim space within the road carriageway for new build outs supporting outdoor dining, fashion displays and shade trees with no parking loss.

##### New shade and understorey planting for street cooling and amenity:

- Plant large shade trees in build outs.
- Introduce understorey planting to enhance amenity and reinforce tropical character.

##### Footpath enhancements:

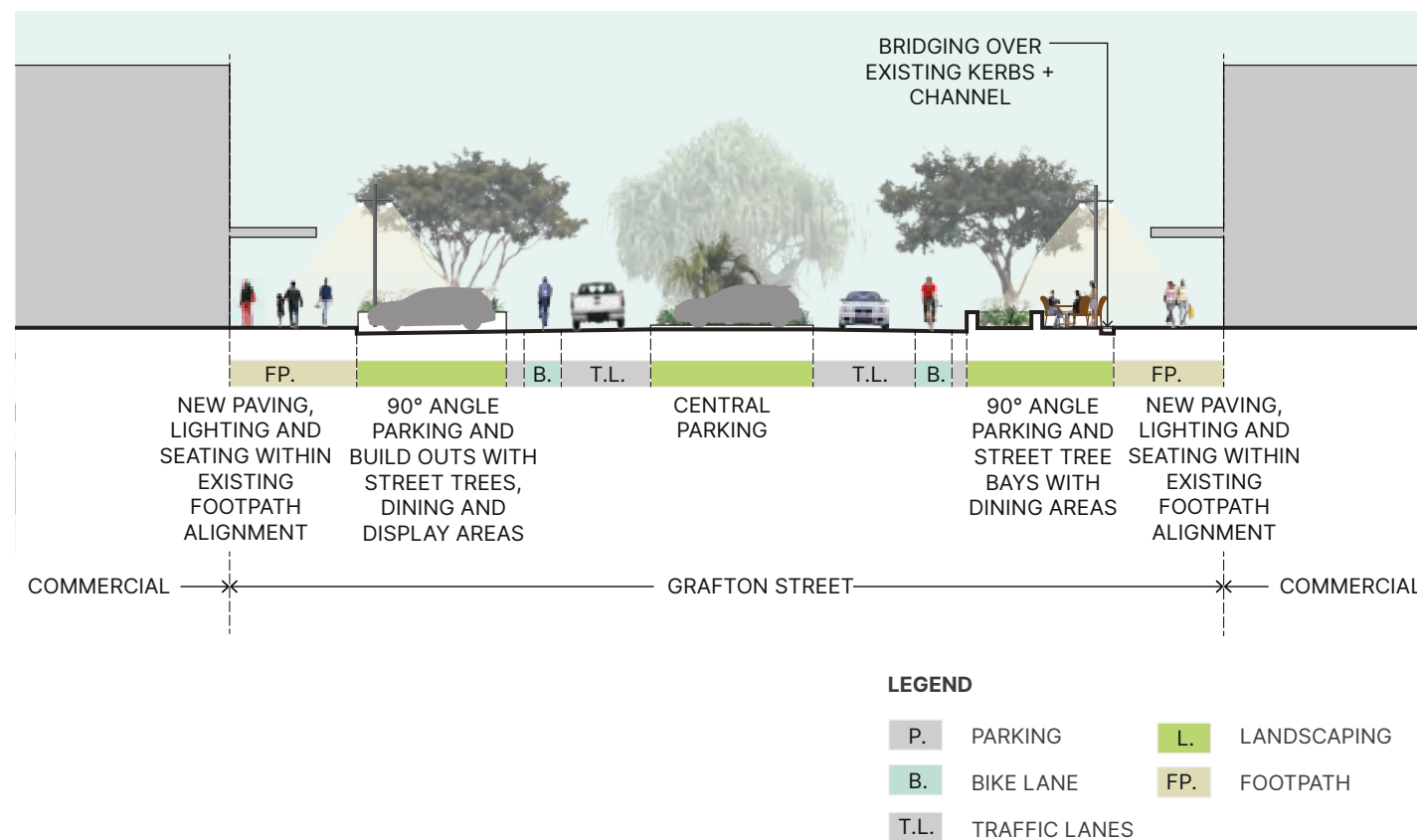
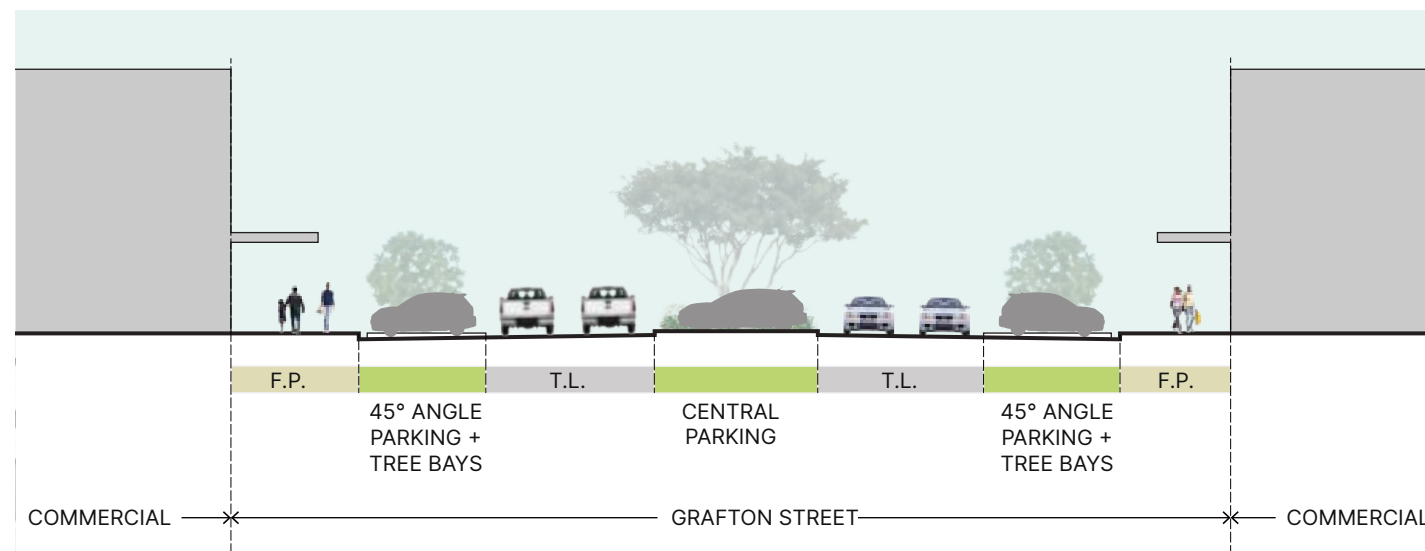
- Renew footpaths to align with the City Centre suite.
- Install new street lighting and furniture in line with the City In A Rainforest Master Plan.
- Incorporate public art to reflect local talents, skills, and community identity.

##### Activation of underutilised sites:

- Encourage long-term activation of Grafton Street through major site redevelopment.
- Support temporary closures for events such as a Tropical Food and Fashion Festival with local fashion parade and food-based events.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces





### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Planting concept

The City South Precinct is a cultural hub where art, identity, and everyday life come together in step with the rhythm of the city. Celebrating Cairns’ Chinatown, the tree palette for Grafton Street has been thoughtfully selected for its form, fragrance, and seasonal character, contributing to a vibrant, culturally rich streetscape. Medians provide continuity and structure, featuring species like the Swamp Bloodwood and Firewheel Tree, whose vivid red and pink flowers reflect traditional Chinese symbolism of luck, joy, and celebration. Along the verges, trees such as the Spanish Cherry and Freshwater Mangrove enhance both comfort and character—offering shade, fragrance, and a striking visual presence. Plantings hint at cultural narratives and layered histories, subtly weaving identity into the everyday experience of the street, while the streetscape offers places to pause, reflect, and celebrate local identity.



Image 24. Spanish Cherry  
(Leonora Enking, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/33037982@N04/>)



Image 25. Firewheel Tree  
(Tatters, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tgerus/>)



Image 26. Swamp Bloodwood  
(Graham Winterflood, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/126953422@N04/>)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Corymbia ptychocarpa</i>	Swamp Bloodwood	Displays striking red/pink flowers, offering a vibrant contrast to the urban environment.
<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Spanish Cherry	Tree has a neat, rounded form with dense, glossy foliage and small, fragrant flowers that subtly perfume the air.
<i>Stenocarpus sinuatus</i>	Firewheel Tree	Displays striking red flowers that echo traditional Chinese symbolism of luck, joy, and celebration.
<i>Barringtonia acutangula</i>	Freshwater Mangrove	Tree has a broad canopy with red flowers which provides shade, creating a comfortable space for pedestrians.
<i>Leptospermum madidum</i>	Weeping Tea Tree	Tree's pendulous form reflects the elegance of traditional Chinese garden design, bringing softness and rhythm to the structured streetscape.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.7 Stream Ways - Enhancing waterways for recreation and connectivity

##### Context and potential

Cairns is home to a network of drains and creeks that form part of the city's stormwater management system. These waterways are essential for managing flood risks and ensuring efficient drainage, particularly during king tide and heavy rainfall events. Where creek channel width is constrained, channel widening may assist in increasing flood water storage and reducing flood flows and levels.

Historically, the natural hydrology of Cairns consisted of sand dunes and mangrove swamps that slowly drained into the sea, creating a dynamic system influenced by both freshwater from surrounding hills and saltwater from tidal surges.

The Trinity Inlet and its mini-catchments also hold significant cultural importance as interconnected landscapes for Cairns' Traditional Custodians. Beyond their functional role in drainage, these urban waterways present a unique opportunity to enhance green space, recreation, and connectivity for a growing residential population in central Cairns.

To better integrate these waterways into the city's urban fabric, a new vision for "Stream Ways" is proposed, transforming these drains into vibrant, multi-use corridors that support both environmental and community well-being. The Stream Ways will provide additional green space and recreation areas that will be so vital to support the growing population of central Cairns. Where channel widening occurs to improve flood resilience, green space and recreation areas will be included.

##### Key initiatives

- **Ecological enhancement and green corridors** - Restoration of waterway banks through strategic planting is needed to enhance ecological values and improve habitat for local wildlife. New shade and endemic landscape is also needed to create continuous green corridors for people to enjoy, linking existing parks and connecting natural spaces throughout the city. Where possible, new parks need to be introduced along these corridors, providing additional recreational spaces for residents.
- **Shaded shared pathways** - A network of shaded shared paths developed adjacent to the Stream Ways, to improve mobility across the city centre while offering scenic, natural environments for exercise and leisure.
- **Safety and activation** - Improved lighting and the implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles will make these corridors safer for public use, particularly at night. These measures will encourage more people to use the pathways, further activating the spaces and enhancing community engagement.
- **Recommended projects** - Two key corridors—Lily Creek and Smiths Creek Stream Ways—need to be the focus of early transformation efforts. The southern section of Smiths Creek and the area of Lily Creek closest to the CBD are identified as recommended projects.



Figure 39. Plan of Stream Ways



Image 27. Smiths Creek



Image 28. Lily Creek



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.8 Smiths Creek Stream Way - Linking the Botanic Gardens to Trinity Inlet

##### Context and potential

The Fearnley Street drain, originally a natural creek, was transformed during World War II as part of Cairns' anti-malarial drainage system. This extensive project, which included 42 kilometers of drains, successfully eliminated malaria transmission by 1945 (Cairns Plan 2016, Planning Scheme Policy – Places of Significance). Today, Smiths Creek holds local heritage significance and remains a key part of the city's stormwater management system.

Smiths Creek flows through wetlands, the Showgrounds, Barlow Park, parklands, schools, and light industrial areas before reaching Trinity Inlet, making it an important ecological and recreational asset.

Revitalising Smiths Creek presents an opportunity to transform an underutilised waterway into a thriving green corridor. By integrating ecological restoration with active transport infrastructure and public spaces, this initiative will create lasting environmental, social, and recreational benefits for the people of Cairns.



Image 29. Smiths Creek artistic impression

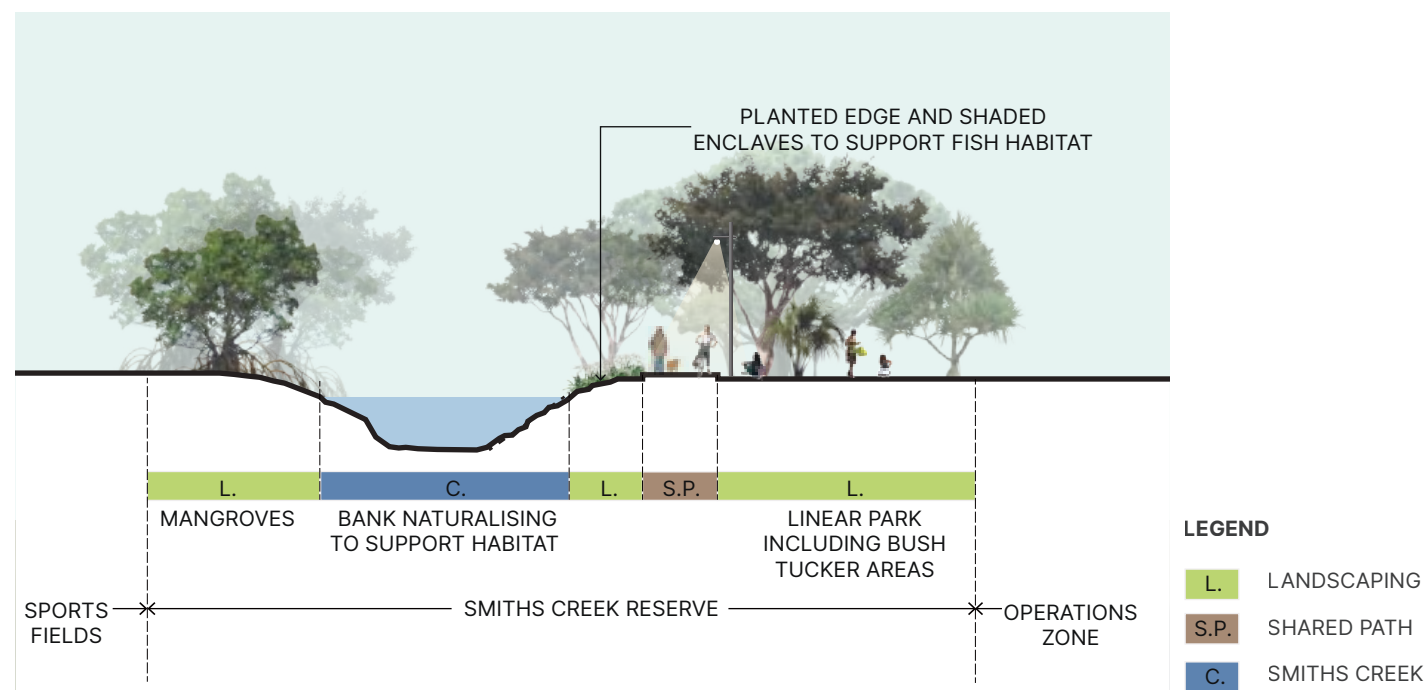


Image 30. Smiths Creek (existing condition)



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Project initiatives



#### Key initiatives:

- **Creating a continuous recreation corridor** - Smiths Creek needs to be transformed as a connected, shaded, and high-quality pedestrian and cycling route to offer safe and comfortable active transport links between parks, schools, and key precincts, reducing reliance on cars and promoting healthier lifestyles.
- **Enhancing connections to existing green spaces** - New pocket parks and improved connections between the creek and adjacent sports grounds need to be provided.
- **Ecological restoration** - Rehabilitating the creek's banks with native plantings will improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, and strengthen ecological resilience. Special attention needs to be given to balancing heritage protection with ecological enhancement.
- **Safety and accessibility improvements** - New lighting and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles will make the corridor safer and more inviting for both daytime and night-time use.
- **Strategic planning for integration** - Linking these works to the master plan for Barlow Park will ensure that improvements are well-integrated, linking green spaces, sporting facilities, and community hubs.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.9 Lily Creek Stream Way - Connecting the Botanic Gardens into the City Heart

##### Context and potential

Lily Creek, a sub-catchment of Saltwater Creek, is a tidal waterway flowing through the Cairns CBD and Cairns North. It passes through wetlands, parklands, and alongside the rail line into Cairns Central Station. The creek has long been a culturally and ecologically significant site, serving as an important food source and gathering place for Cairns' First Peoples. Today, it remains a vital habitat for local wildlife, including flying foxes, bush turkeys, rock pigeons, and various fish species such as Mangrove Jack, Barramundi, Jungle Perch, and prawns, as identified in surveys by OzFish.

A number of stretches of Lily Creek are beautifully vegetated, offering peaceful landscape retreats for community members.

While some sections of Lily Creek already have pedestrian paths, these are narrow and many areas lack proper connectivity. In addition, some sections lack 'natural surveillance' and visual connection to surrounding residential areas. The creek is also weed infested in many areas.

Given its cultural, landscape and ecological values, and location straddling consolidation housing areas of central Cairns, Lily Creek has enormous potential as a green and active transport corridor that enhances connectivity, ecological health, and public amenity. It could in the future be connected to form a 'green loop' with the Botanic Gardens, central Cairns, the Convention Centre precinct and the Esplanade, offering significant opportunities for visitors and locals to engage with Cairns' endemic and cultural landscapes on a high amenity and engaging journey.



Image 32. Lily Creek (existing condition)



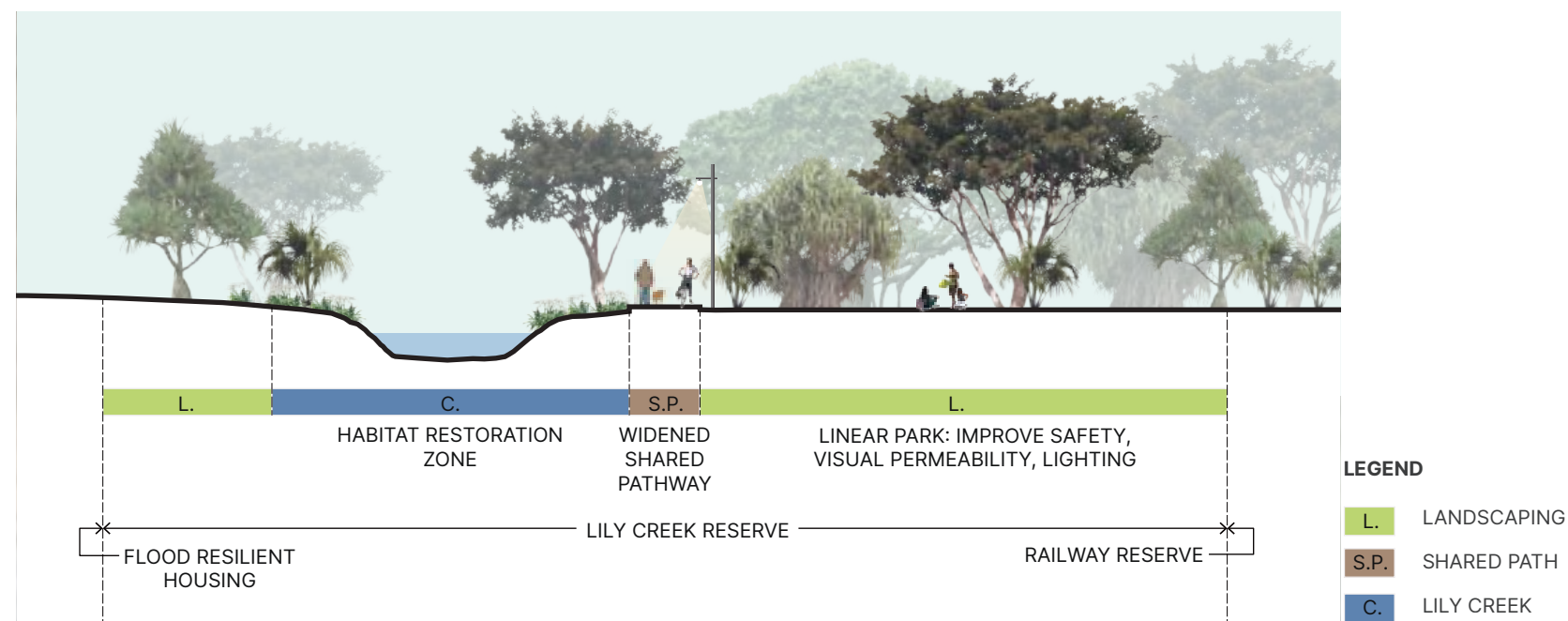
Image 31. Lily Creek artistic impression



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Project initiatives

The Lily Creek Stream Way needs to be regenerated **into a continuous green recreation corridor** that builds upon its natural settings, and ecological and cultural values.



#### Key initiatives:

- **Retention and consolidation of mature trees** to preserve biodiversity and shade.
- **Fish habitat restoration** to enhance the ecological health of the waterway.
- **Creation of a formalised active transport corridor**, improving pedestrian pathways and bikeways.
- **Upgraded lighting** to improve safety and visibility for users.
- **Expansion of green spaces** wherever possible to provide additional recreation areas.
- **New shade trees** along pathways and creek banks to enhance comfort and protect against future weed infestations.



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Planting concept

Planting along Smiths Creek and Lily Creek focuses on habitat restoration and the enhancement of biodiversity within these important waterway ecosystems. The landscape palette prioritises the use of endemic species that are ecologically valuable and culturally significant to Traditional Owners. Species such as Red Beech has traditionally been used for food, reflecting their enduring role in local knowledge. Culturally important trees like the Wongai Plum and Desert Quandong further embed Indigenous practices and stories into the landscape, enriching the area with layers of meaning and memory. The inclusion of species such as various Melaleucas adds not only ecological benefit but also acknowledges ceremonial and medicinal uses rooted in tradition. The selected plantings support native wildlife while honouring the deep cultural and environmental relationships that have shaped the creek corridors.



Image 33. Quandong  
(Doug Beckers, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dougbeckers/>)



Image 34. Yigiyigi  
(<https://perennial.com/plant-species-database-search-finder/species/2717>)



Image 35. Mangrove Fern  
(Fagg, M, via Atlas of Living Australia, <https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://id.biodiversity.org.au/node/apni/2887579#gallery>)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Aegiceras corniculatum</i>	River Mangrove	Supports habitat restoration and biodiversity. Establishes the foundational structure of the intertidal zone, stabilising sediment, mitigating erosion, and forming complex root systems that serve as vital nursery habitat for fish, crabs, and other estuarine species.
<i>Avicennia marina</i>	Grey Mangrove	
<i>Melaleuca spp.</i>	Melaleuca (Paperbark)	**Its bark, leaves, and flowers have long been used in ceremony, medicine, and daily life.
<i>Dillenia alata</i>	Red Beech	
<i>Melaleuca spp.</i>	Paperbark	**Its bark, leaves, and flowers have long been used in ceremony, medicine, and daily life.
<i>Manilkara kauki</i>	Wongai Plum / Wongi Tree	
<i>Santalum acuminatum</i>	Quandong (Desert)	**It produces nutrient-rich fruit that has long been collected and traded by Indigenous communities
<i>Acrostichum speciosum</i>	Mangrove Fern	
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Lomandra	** Its long, fibrous leaves were traditionally harvested to make strong string and woven into mats or baskets.
<i>Eleocharis dulcis</i>	Yigiyigi (Water Chestnut )	It plays a dual role: stabilising soil in saturated areas and providing a culturally significant food source. **The starchy tubers are traditionally harvested by digging in soft, silty substrates, offering a valuable carbohydrate-rich food. Its inclusion supports both ecological function, improving water filtration and habitat for aquatic species.

Recommended by OzFish and TOs

\*\* Require review by TO



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### 3.10 Community Ways - Partnerships for cooling and ecological restoration

##### Context and potential

If the Green Ways and Stream Ways are the main “arteries” of the city’s urban greening strategy, then the Community Ways function as the “veins”—localized pedestrian routes that bring cooling, shade, ecological improvement and community connection at a neighbourhood scale.

Cairns as a city is blessed with active and engaged communities with powerful connections to their local environment. At the same time, the areas where people gather, walk, and connect in their neighbourhood streets and green spaces require ecological restoration and enhanced greenery to improve liveability.

Community-driven initiatives for greening and shade tree planting in local areas are needed to strengthen social connections, enhance urban biodiversity, and create a more liveable and climate-resilient city. Close collaboration with Traditional Owners in creek rehabilitation and cultural landscape creation will further embed Indigenous knowledge into urban greening efforts.

##### Initiatives

Community Ways initiatives focus on local street greening, habitat restoration, and ecological partnerships. Key actions include:

- **Community-led street tree planting programs** to shade and cool residential areas.
- **Council-supported supply of plants** to encourage local greening efforts.
- **Partnerships with Traditional Owners** to rehabilitate culturally significant creeks and drains.
- **Collaborations with community organisations** to restore fish habitats and improve waterway health.
- **Development of productive and permaculture gardens** in underutilized spaces to promote food security and sustainable urban agriculture.

These initiatives will provide vital green connectors for Cairns’ growing residential population, improving walkability, shade, and local biodiversity. They will also strengthen cultural connections to the land by recognizing that Trinity Inlet and its mini-catchments are part of an interconnected cultural landscape for the Traditional Owners.

It is important to understand the principles of how partnerships with Traditional Owners should work. These have been clearly articulated in the following ‘Gimuy’s Guiding Principles’, approved by the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Elders Aboriginal Corporation for use.

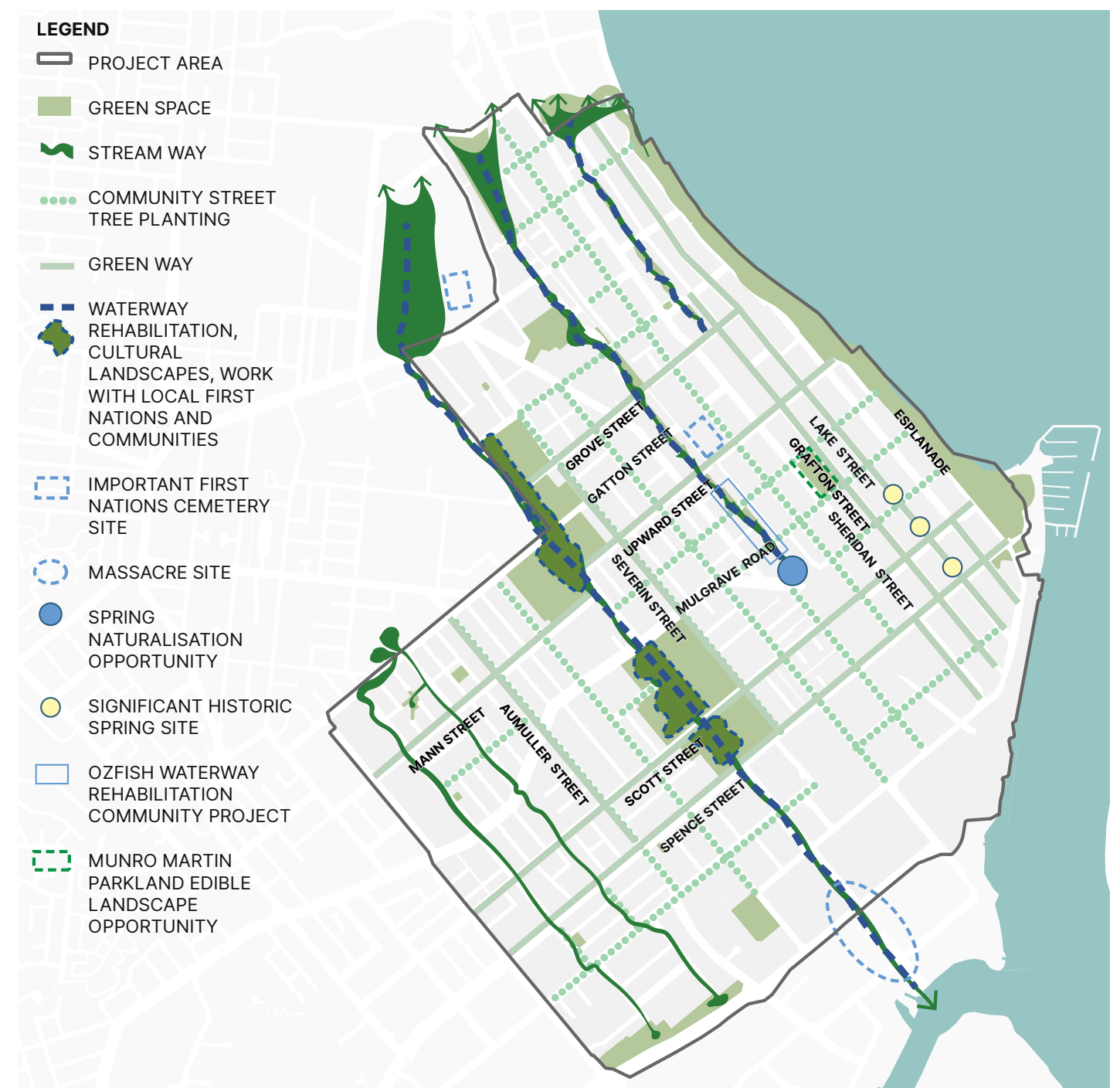


Figure 42. Plan of Community Ways



### 3 A lattice of cool green streets and public spaces

#### Guiding principles for resilience in Gimuy

##### 1. Tribal Law and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as the foundation

- Resilience in Gimuy is built on the deep ecological knowledge and governance structures of the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people.
- The land and the people are one; when the land is sick, so are the people. Healing and resilience require a cultural approach that restores balance.
- Traditional knowledge systems, including seasonal indicators, fire management, and cultural site protections, must lead decision-making processes.

##### 2. Cultural and ecological connectivity

- The Trinity Inlet and its mini-catchments are interconnected cultural landscapes.
- Any city resilience plan must acknowledge and support these linkages.
- Protecting and restoring sacred sites, including waterways and natural corridors, ensures cultural and ecological resilience.
- Recognizing traditional resource management practices, such as biocultural fish farms and fire regimes, strengthens sustainability.

##### 3. Community leadership and governance

- Resilience is not just about infrastructure—it is about people. The Gimuy Walubara Yidinji community must be active decision-makers, not just stakeholders.
- Traditional governance structures should be embedded in planning and implementation, ensuring Indigenous leadership at all levels.
- Intergenerational learning and youth engagement must be prioritized to sustain resilience beyond a single planning cycle.

##### 4. Water is life – prioritizing cultural flows

- Waterways are not just environmental assets; they are living entities that carry cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance.
- Protecting freshwater sources, groundwater, and coastal ecosystems is non-negotiable for long-term resilience.
- A city resilience plan must include strong water management strategies that align with cultural flows, ensuring that water movement and access honor traditional custodianship.

##### 5. Climate adaptation rooted in cultural knowledge

- Resilience strategies must recognize that the Yidinji people have adapted to climate shifts, including sea-level rise, for thousands of years.
- TEK provides solutions for flood adaptation, fire management, and food security that must be incorporated into broader climate adaptation policies.
- Local knowledge of native plants, soil health, and landscape management can enhance climate resilience through culturally informed restoration efforts.

##### 6. Integration of TEK with science for stronger outcomes

- Western science must support, not dictate, resilience planning. Integrating Indigenous-led research with scientific methodologies strengthens decision-making.
- Tools such as drone mapping, eDNA monitoring, and GIS should be used to amplify, not replace, traditional observation and ecological assessments.
- Collaborative projects between Indigenous groups, researchers, and government agencies should be long-term partnerships, not short-term consultations.

##### 7. Economic and social resilience through cultural enterprise

- Indigenous-led land and sea management programs must be fully funded and recognized as key resilience strategies.
- Cultural tourism, native plant nurseries, and sustainable bushfood industries should be supported as economic pathways that strengthen resilience.
- Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) should be embedded in city planning as cultural and ecological strongholds.



## Part B

Housing:  
A thriving, diverse  
housing ecosystem

**“Housing is the foundation for good health, wellbeing and engagement with education, employment and community.”**

Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025





# 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

## 4.1 Context and potential

As the population of Cairns continues to grow and demographic trends evolve, the demand for housing solutions that accommodate a diverse range of needs is increasingly important. Continued population growth, with an estimated 241,000 people predicted to call Cairns home by 2050, coupled with shifting household structures, will create significant pressure on the existing housing supply in Cairns. It is essential in addressing these challenges that the varying needs of different population segments, such as families, single individuals, aging populations, and short-term workers are considered.

The unique tropical location of Cairns and the increasing impact of climate change impacts such as flooding, storm tide inundation and coastal erosion means it is essential for development to not only address the housing needs of the population but also integrate resilience within housing design and planning.

In addition to the housing demand and climate challenges, a key factor impacting housing delivery in Cairns is the feasibility of development projects, which is heavily influenced by market conditions. Growth in property prices, changes to interest rates and increasing land and construction costs are significantly impacting on the viability of new housing projects. A recent Constructability and Feasibility Study undertaken by Bull and Bear Economics, identified that high construction costs and relatively low realisation values have led to struggles in delivering feasible development in the focus precincts. The study did however identify increased potential for infill housing forms such as triplex and quadplex development.

To address the demand for housing, Cairns Regional Council recently endorsed the Cairns Local Housing Action Plan (LHAP). The plan recognises CRC's various roles in delivering housing including as:

- Advocate
- Facilitator
- Funder
- Partner
- Provider
- Regulator

While it is noted that Council cannot control all aspects of housing delivery, there are key actions that Council can undertake to improve feasibility outcomes and support the delivery of housing forms that respond to the needs of the community. These actions include advocating for policy changes, adopting a streamlined approach to development approvals, increasing investment in social housing, and fostering collaboration between government, private, and not-for-profit sectors.



Image 36. Various roles of Council



## 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

### Planning and design considerations

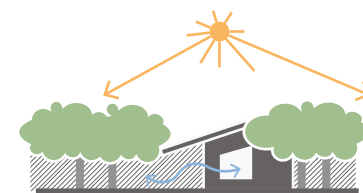
The planning scheme plays an important role in ensuring development responds to the housing demands of the community, the demands of the market and the feasibility of development while implementing best practice design principles that respond to Cairns' tropical climate.

Importantly, the principles that inform precinct design must also be applied at the individual lot level. To create thriving precincts, new housing—regardless of scale—should actively engage with the street, offering 'eyes to the street' and informal surveillance of public spaces, including parks and green corridors. A diverse mix of housing is essential to meet the varying needs of households and to support the vitality of precincts.

Additionally, site redevelopment presents a valuable opportunity to help cool the city through the planting of shade trees and the integration of tropical landscaping, and this can be adopted as a priority for all new housing from duplexes through to low scale apartments and taller buildings.

A key consideration for the planning scheme is to ensure that housing delivery continues to be supported at a scale that reflects the intended character while meeting the growing needs. As part of the delivery of the new planning scheme for Cairns, a move to a form-based approach for land uses will streamline approval processes and improve community understanding of design outcomes. To support increased diversity in housing forms, additional typologies being triplex and quadplex development are recommended to be more directly regulated through the scheme, with clear guidance across each of the multiple dwelling building types.

Opportunities also exist as part of the implementation of both the current and new planning scheme, with the role of Council planning teams within the development assessment phase having a significant impact on housing outcomes. To provide a key evidence base to support Council decision-making, the following four critical design outcomes, referred to as Design Deliverables, have been identified as being most important to the community in contributing to the street / neighbourhood / centre Cairns liveability as well as to individual home liveability. These are:



**Tropically responsive**



**Safe community-oriented streets**



**Good neighbours**



**Resilient**

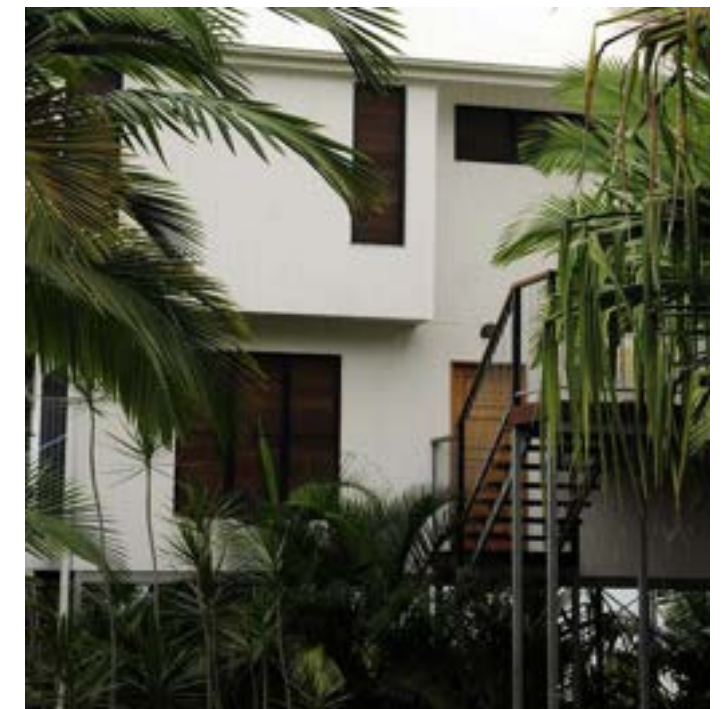


Image 37. Examples of tropically responsive design



## 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

**Tropically responsive** – New buildings need to provide safe, cool living spaces to ensure inhabitants can be comfortable in heat waves, including without use of air conditioning. This means engaging design practices that deliver shade and air movement.

Specific targets include:

- Greatly increased urban canopy via front yards, backyards and street trees to contribute to shading of dwellings and reduce ambient temperatures, lessening urban heat island effect.
- Fostering air movement in dwellings – ensuring effective cross ventilation so dwellings are able to be cooled without A/C when needed.
- Effective sun shading over windows to prevent ingress of sun during the hottest months of the year.
- Minimising impervious areas, particularly dark coloured hard stand, which contributes to urban heat island effect.

**Safe community-oriented streets** – During hubs Cairns stakeholders repeatedly expressed concerns about personal safety on streets. Blank facades, buildings dominated by parking frontage at street level and high walls prevent interaction between public spaces and streets, contributing to poor personal safety. Housing design should enhance interaction with streets and public spaces by designing for informal surveillance, with ‘eyes on the street’ to improve personal safety.

Specific targets include:

- Tandem garages on small frontages for duplex, triplex, quadplex and town houses.
- Avoidance of blank frontages and high walls to streets for apartments and mixed-use buildings.
- Buildings provide ‘eyes to the street’ with, where possible, ground floor activity and/or upper-level rooms facing streets.
- Building entrances clearly addressing streets and public spaces.



Image 38. Integration of tropical gardens and courtyards



Image 39. Shaded openings and natural ventilation



Image 40. Parking does not dominate frontage, building entrances and rooms provide ‘eyes to the street’



## 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

**Good neighbours** – As housing density increases, maintaining privacy and quality of life between neighbours is essential. Design has a major role to play in ensuring new development respects the amenity of adjacent dwellings.

Targets include:

- Strengthen design compliance of overlooking provisions, particularly in relation to screening.
- Focussing on site planning and layouts that support privacy, particularly ensuring verandahs, living spaces, bedrooms etc. do not directly face into those of an adjacent dwelling.
- Landscape and screening to make private spaces – often privacy can be achieved with micro design elements – small courtyards, screens, planting etc.

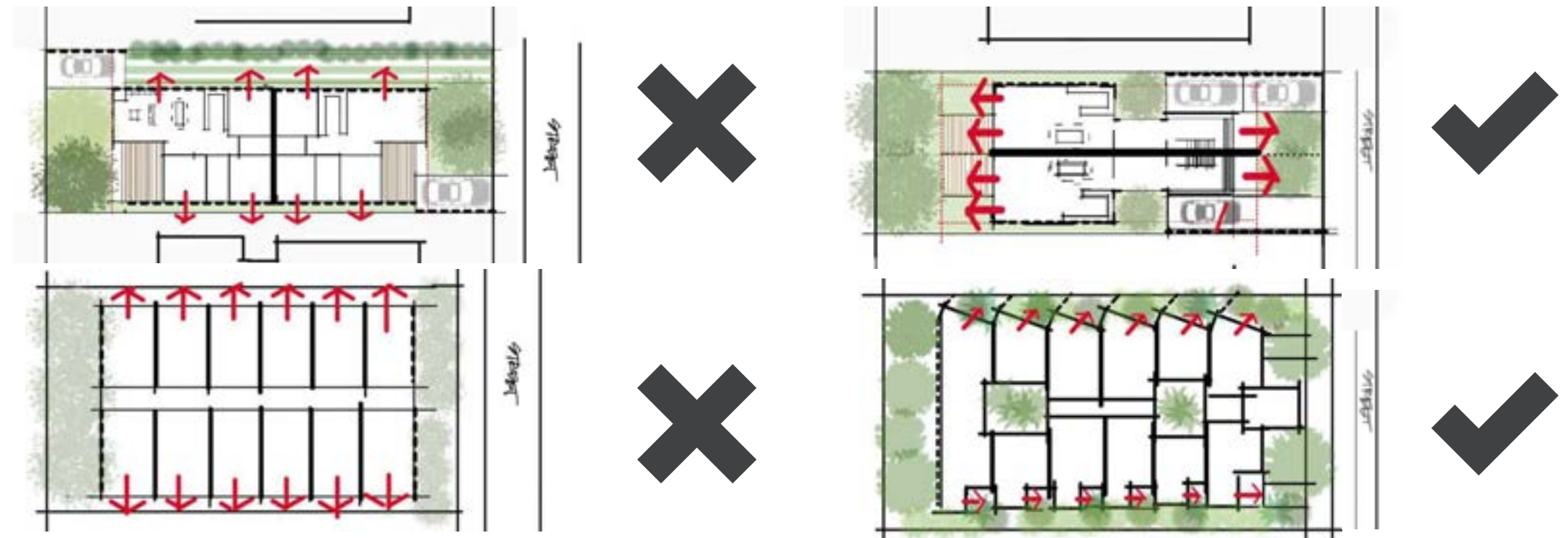


Figure 43. Views from residential buildings

**Resilient** – While city wide mitigation underpins the development of new housing, it is also essential that all new dwellings are compliant with the Flood and Inundations Hazards Overlay Code.

Any flood prone sections of new construction need to be designed to be flood resilient, to reduce the human and cost impacts of flood damage. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority has provided Flood Resilient Building Guidance for Queensland Homes (February 2019, last updated in February 2023) which details flood resilient design strategies for a range of dwelling and construction types, providing a vital resource for design. In addition, landscape design can assist with reduction of localised flood impacts, particularly in minimising impervious surfaces.



Figure 44. Flood resilient building diagram  
(For details refer: Flood\_Resilient\_Building\_Guidance\_for\_Queensland\_Homes\_February with amended layout)



## 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

### 4.2 Initiatives

Increasing housing supply in central Cairns requires both short-term and long-term strategies, across **policy advocacy, infrastructure investment, and urban planning and partnerships**. These are detailed in the Road Map. The spatial elements of these are:

#### Plan for growth in three precincts around key destinations:

##### Health Precinct

- Encourage site amalgamations near the hospital to support viable housing intensification.
- Promote duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and three-story apartments in lower-density areas.
- Deliver housing as part of a mixed-use development on the remaining CHIP site.
- Partner with community housing providers to transition government-owned sites near Lily Creek into long-term housing solutions.

##### City Centre South Precinct

- Facilitate comprehensive master planning to deliver high-intensity accommodation around the Convention Centre and Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal.

##### Major Events Precinct

- Support duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and three-story apartments in existing lower density areas.
- Enable higher-intensity housing on large-scale sites south of Spence Street.

#### Planning Scheme amendments

The Constructability and feasibility study undertaken by Bull & Bear Economics identified improved feasibility prospects for the delivery of small-scale development such as Dual occupancy, Triplex and Quadplex typologies.

To encourage the uptake of these built forms, it is recommended that an amendment be made to the Cairns Plan 2016 (the planning scheme) to introduce specific development benchmarks, in addition to those already existing, for Dual Occupancy, for Triplex and Quadplex housing typologies. This amendment would ensure a consistent approach to the design and delivery of these uses, promoting their uptake with both small-scale domestic developers and potentially larger scale developers.

The codes would also ensure the design direction is achieved providing guidance on factors such as layout, built form, landscaping, private open space, climate-responsive design.

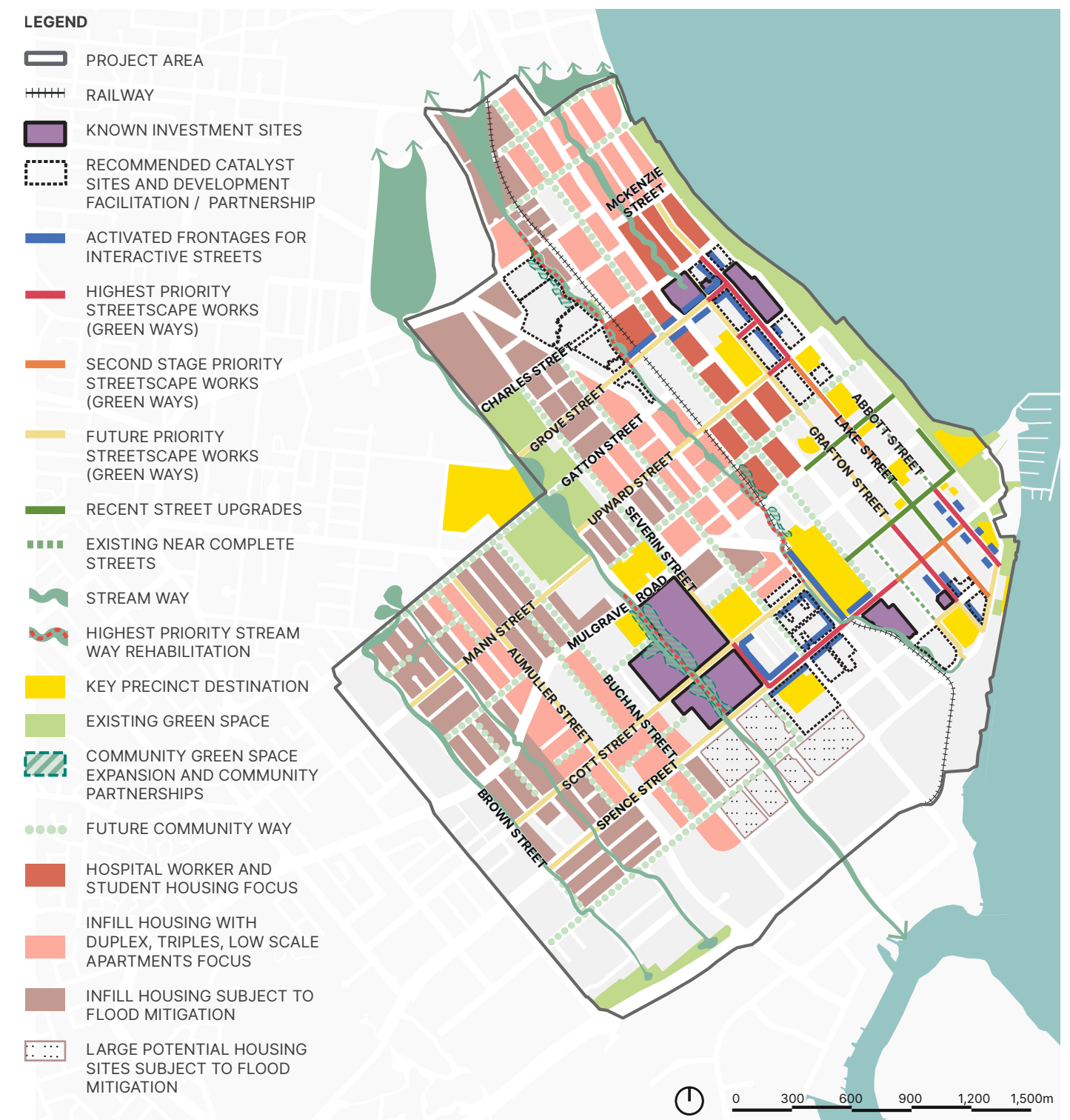


Figure 45. Housing location



# 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

## Easing approvals pathways

To drive the critical design outcomes, Design Deliverables, through to construction on the ground, and to provide certainty, clarity and consistency for both Council's Development Assessment team and applicants, a number of "non-negotiable" design provisions, which must be evident in housing proposals, have been identified and are recommended. These include:

- Provision of minimum landscaping outcomes on sites (including deep planting and trees)
- Providing active streetscapes that promote a quality streetscape interface and provide for 'eyes on the street' to facilitate perception of safety
- Ensuring privacy to habitable room and outdoor living spaces
- Designing for natural hazard resilience.

All other design provisions are considered "negotiable" and may be supported based on performance solutions. This revised development assessment implementation approach will ensure clear messaging for both developers and council and facilitate streamlining and transparency of the intended outcomes.

In addition, provide a streamlined Development Assessment process through Council's Express Development Application (Express DA) service based on good design for duplexes (currently part of Express DA process), triplexes and quadplexes. The fast-track process is to be based on a range of pre-designed housing layouts, developed by Council in association with architectural and industry guidance. The layouts will provide adaptable and affordable designs, that consider Cairns' unique climate and exemplify the Design Deliverables for these typologies.

## "Test fits" of design deliverables

To ensure that the priority design deliverables are achievable for the housing forms that are most viable to develop in the current housing construction and development market, preliminary 'test fit' design concepts have been prepared for typical site configurations in areas of Westcourt, Paramatta Park and Bungalow, focussing on duplexes and triplexes.

These 'test fits' have been prepared for a duplex on an approximately 400m2 site, and a triplex on an approximately 600m2 site. The configuration for the 400m2 can be extrapolated to a Quadplex over 800m2. However, it is important to note that having a sufficiently wide block frontage to the street is critical to the delivery of these outcomes. A frontage width less than 6m for each dwelling would further design investigation.

The concept designs demonstrate: significant shade tree planting in front and rear yards; effective cross ventilation through a central planted courtyard which acts as a 'reservoir' of cool air; privacy to neighbours achieved through the orientation and screening of rooms; and provision of 'natural surveillance' to the street, achieved through tandem parking combined with a clearly articulated front entrance and upper-level bedroom overlooking the street.

The 'test fits' will require significant further design development and verification, particularly in relation to flood and storm tide inundation, dwelling orientation and climatic design and market appetite.

### Concept layout for a duplex on 417m2

This layout demonstrates:

- 3 bedrooms, living area, study, 2 bath, 2 cars
- 50% site cover
- 5m front and rear setback, 1m side setback
- 5x3m shade tree zone in front yard, 5x6m shade tree zone in rear yard, excludes covered outdoor space
- Flood resilient option – half landing up or 3 storeys with parking/utility to ground floor
- Ventilation provided to the 3rd bedroom via a planted courtyard
- Tandem parking to ensure interactivity on the street

### Concept layout triplex on 612m2

This layout demonstrates:

- 3 bedrooms, living area, study, 2 bath, 2 cars
- 50% site cover
- Setbacks: 5m front, 7m back, 1m side setback
- 5x3m shade tree zone in front yard, minimum 5x6m shade tree zone in rear yard, excludes covered outdoor space
- Flood resilient option – half landing up or 3 storeys with parking/utility to ground floor
- Ventilation provided to the 3rd bedroom via a planted courtyard
- Tandem parking to ensure interactivity on the street

This format can also be extrapolated to situations where two approximately 400m2 blocks are combined to 800m2, and a quadplex can be achieved.



## 4 A thriving, diverse housing ecosystem

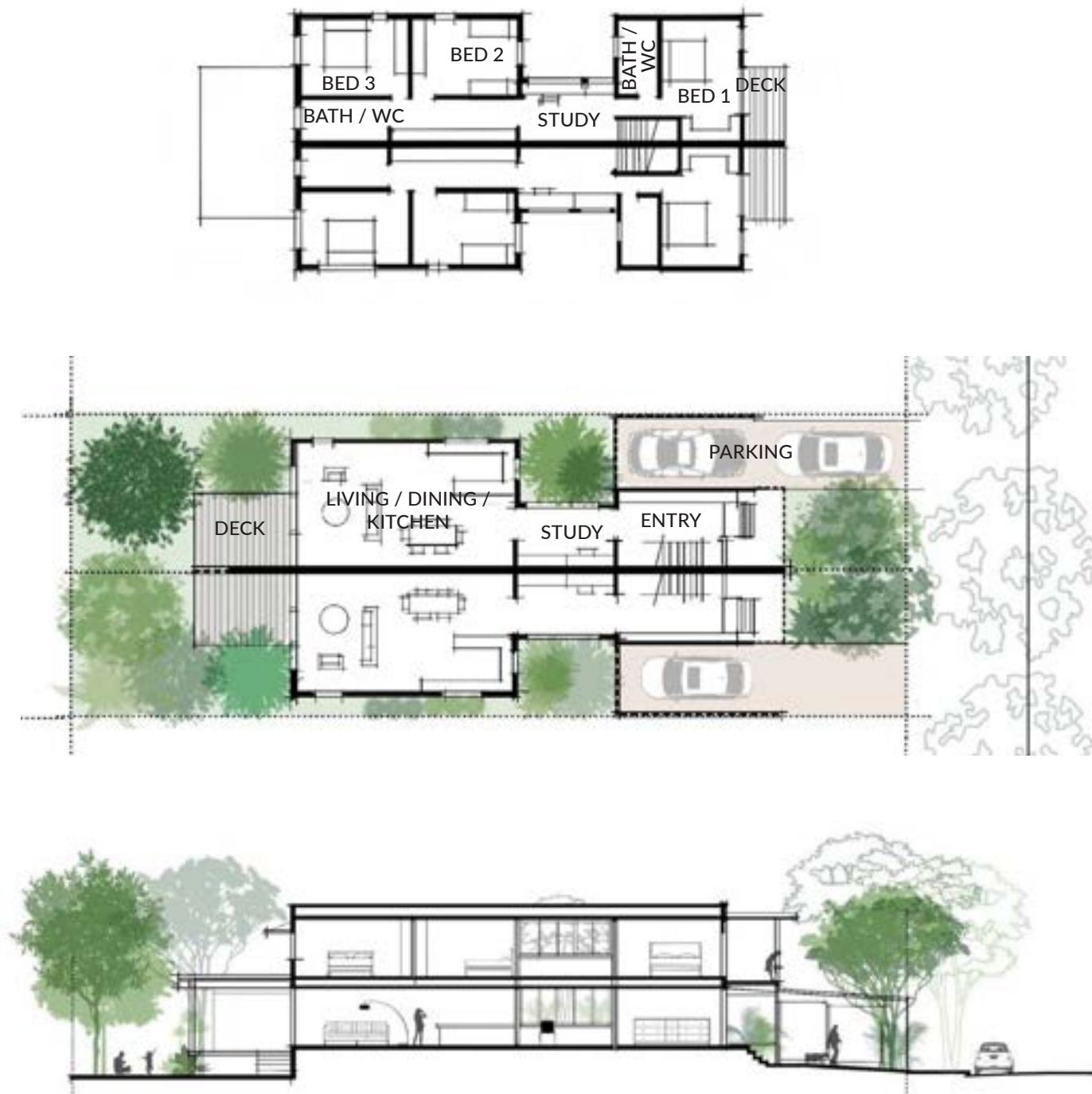


Figure 46. Duplex concept layout

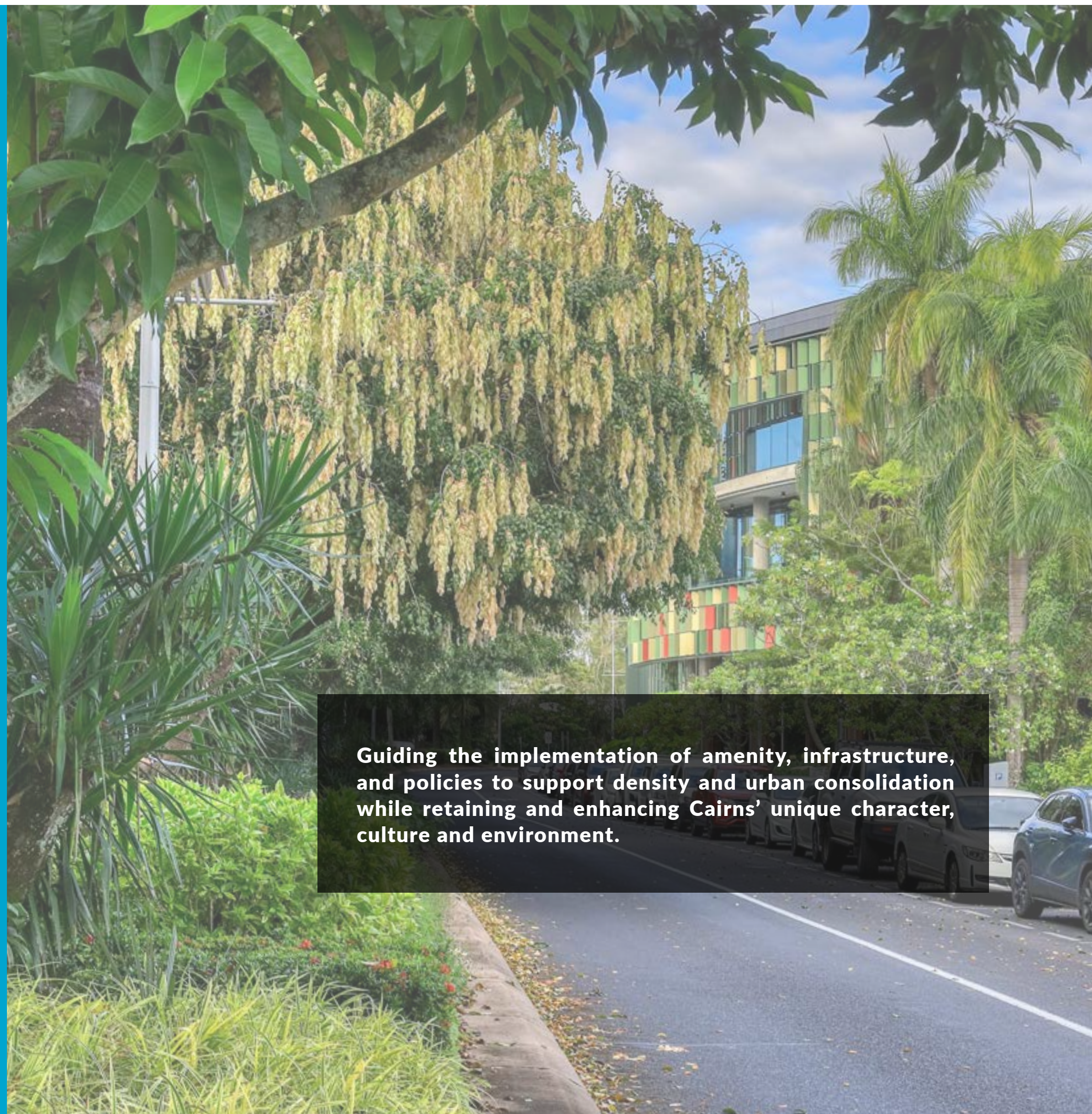


Figure 47. Triplex concept layout



Part B

## Road Map: Implementing the plan



**Guiding the implementation of amenity, infrastructure, and policies to support density and urban consolidation while retaining and enhancing Cairns' unique character, culture and environment.**



# 5 Road Map

## 5.1 Implementing the plan

The regeneration of central Cairns aims to deliver diverse housing options and vibrant tropical neighbourhoods, centred around the revitalized Health, City Centre South, and Major Events Precincts. This ambitious project requires several key implementation components:

- **Facilitation of development:** Proactive efforts from Council and the development industry with support from other levels of government, housing providers and the community to reduce or remove barriers to developing more quality and diverse housing in central Cairns.
- **Policy and planning changes:** Explicit support for duplex, triplex, and quadplex housing typologies to encourage more housing diversity as well as streamline approval process for these typologies which have increased development potential in the current market.
- **Staged public realm investment:** Leveraging other government investments in the precincts to support the overall uplift in central Cairns, generating activity, improving livability, and attracting further investment, including development.
- **Partnerships:** Essential for achieving the Project outcomes. Every aspect of this Project relies on collaborative, strong and genuine partnerships to both unify and coordinate effort. The community, Traditional Owners, development industry, State and Federal government, other organisations active in central Cairns (for example OzFish), housing providers and key agency and institutional investors in Cairns are among the many partnerships to be nurtured.

As with any project which involves Council, they play a multitude of roles including advocate, facilitator, funder (including seeking funding from other funding sources), partner, provider and regulator. All of Council's roles are crucial to the implementation of this project.

The Road Map utilises a framework of community, environmental and economic criteria to prioritise initiatives as well as recommending a short, medium or long term timeframe for initiative delivery of this long term Project. Whilst some initiatives are expected to be able to be delivered by Council as part of their 'business as usual' budget, others will require sourced funding or specific capital works funding allocations. The Road Map provides cost estimates for recommended capital works projects, including the streetscape works and Stream Ways.

The Road Map offers a structured framework for initiatives, enabling the Council to concentrate on the most crucial projects. This ensures efficient resource allocation and alignment of priorities with the long-term visions of both the plan and the Council and the community.



Figure 48. Road Map



The Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project

