

Transform and realise opportunities

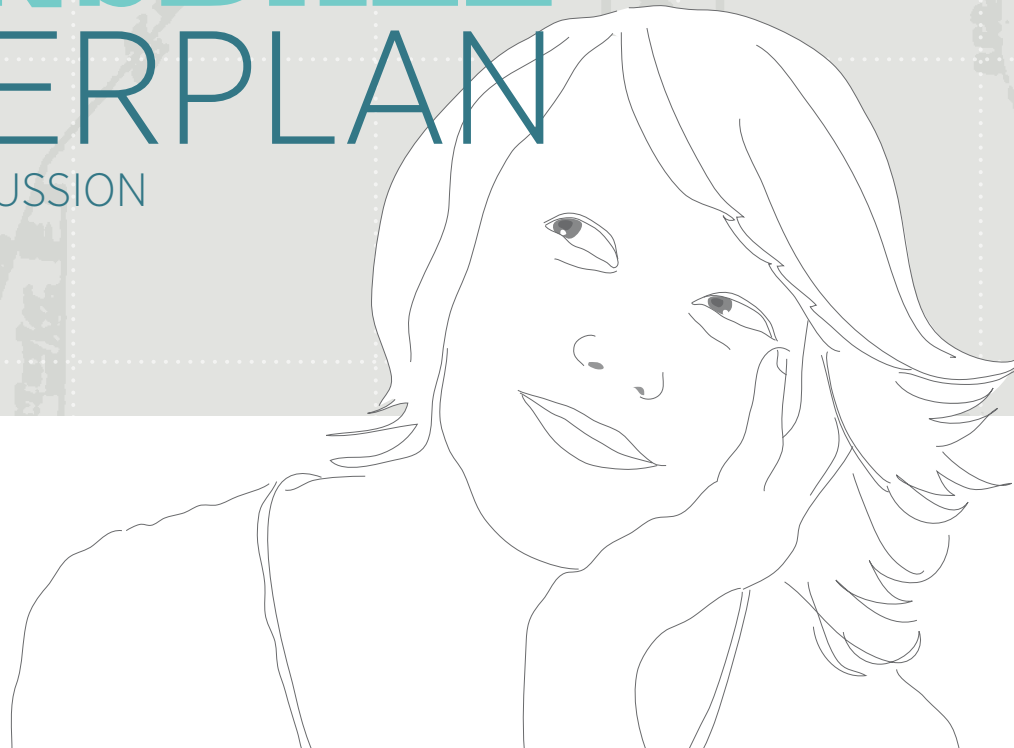
People and places

Diverse community and commerce



ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

VOLUME 1



RE-IMAGINE

Transform and realise
opportunities

CONNECT

People and places

ENJOY

Diverse community
and commerce

RE-IMAGINING BAIRNSDALE MASTERPLAN

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
VOLUME 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document has been prepared under the guidance of key stakeholders representing the East Gippsland Shire Council, the Bairnsdale CBD reference group, community representatives, local traders and business representatives. It has been written by Message Consultants Pty Ltd in collaboration with MDG Landscape Architects, Crossco Consulting and Traffic Works.

The detailed precinct plans for the Nicholson Street Mall and Main Street Gardens have been prepared and documented by MDG Landscape Architects and Crossco Consulting.



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1 WHERE DO WE START?



A photograph of a park scene. In the foreground, a woman in a red shirt and light blue shorts sits on a long wooden bench, looking down at a black bag. A brown and white dog lies on the paved path next to her. The path is made of blue and grey paving stones and leads into the distance. On the left, there are more wooden benches and a blue metal archway. In the background, there are trees, a brick building, and a few other people walking. The scene is bright and sunny, with shadows cast on the path.

"Cities are the places where people meet to encourage ideas trade or simply relax and enjoy themselves. A city's public domain – its streets, squares and parks – is the stage and the catalyst for these activities."

Richard Rogers

Foreword to *Cities for People* by Jan Gehl

“...After the assistant Surveyor’s provision of ample tempting space [in Main St], one can wrongly suspect the town of perpetual poverty, and uneasily of poverty of imagination.

Generations of citizens seem to have missed a point and misused a heritage and an opportunity.”

Hal Porter, *Bairnsdale: Portrait of an Australian Country Town*, 1976.

The aim of this Masterplan is to turn Porter’s sentiment on its head.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTERPLAN

The purpose of this work is to create a contemporary, vibrant urban centre in Bairnsdale with public spaces that support commercial and social activity and a more sustainable city.

In recent years the Bairnsdale CBD has seen limited investment in the public realm and is often referred to as ‘tired’. East Gippsland Shire Council and the local community have expressed their desire to improve the image, function, safety and vibrancy of the Bairnsdale CBD and its public spaces.

The aim of this Masterplan is to provide a framework for re-imagining Bairnsdale in the 21st century as a sustainable, multi-faceted city with connected and interesting public spaces.

While this is referred to as a Masterplan it is in many senses more than that. It is a wide ranging strategy that is to be implemented in three “threads of endeavour” as this report outlines in the following chapters.

THREE THREADS OF ENDEAVOUR

The three threads of endeavour are:

1 Renewal

Firstly, to institute some long overdue renewal of key public realm spaces namely the Nicholson Street Mall, Bairnsdale Library and the Main Street gardens. Towns are judged by many on how they look, feel and smell and these spaces have the capacity to redefine the perception of Bairnsdale’s public realm.

2 Improvement strategies

The second is to set up strategies for ‘improving’ the quality of the town. This includes street tree planting and furniture improvements and linking assets such as the Mitchell River and extending the walkability of the town.

3 Programme of activities

The third is to introduce an integrated programme for diversifying and intensifying the range of activities in the core. This includes a programme of assisting traders to activate key lane way linkages, encouraging events into the city centre and building new accommodation on the top of shops.

Nicholson
Street Mall: key
priority area for
regeneration

Nicholson Street Mall 2012



The Masterplan will be successfully achieved by:

- Adopting a clear strategic vision for the CBD core
- Pursuing a series of infrastructure renewal programmes including the library, the Mall and Main Street gardens
- Encouraging incremental public and private works initiatives such as greening Bairnsdale's streets
- Focussing diverse and regular activities into the core.

This report is in two volumes. Volume 1 sets down the analysis, ideas and rationale of the Masterplan. Volume 2 describes and illustrates the 'Public Realm Works, Priority and Costs'.

This is a pivotal project for Bairnsdale and its community. The CBD's proximity to the Mitchell River and its civic role serving the wider region, underpin Bairnsdale's harmonious appeal as a city in the country. By drawing on the intrinsic qualities of Bairnsdale, this Masterplan presents an opportunity to re-imagine the CBD and reclaim its deserved focus as the western gateway to the Gippsland Lakes.

COUNCIL'S BRIEF

The need for the revitalisation of the Bairnsdale central business district was identified in the *Bairnsdale Growth Strategy, 2009*. The Strategy has influenced Council's project brief for the Masterplan and has informed the development of the Masterplan concept. The key objectives of Council's *Bairnsdale CBD Improvement Project Brief* are to:

- Create visually cohesive and functional spaces through the development of unified urban design themes that reflect the history and varied functions of the CBD;
- Improve vehicle, pedestrian and cycle circulation and movement patterns around the CBD;
- Enhance the linkages and the relationship between the CBD and the Mitchell River environs;
- Enhance the functionality, operation and amenity of the environs of Nicholson Street, Service Street and Bailey Street, north of Main Street as part of the retail core;
- Progress the relevant recommendations, strategies and objectives of the Bairnsdale Growth Strategy, Bairnsdale CBD Walking and Wayfinding Study, Bairnsdale CBD Car Parking Strategy and the Bairnsdale CBD Business Plan;
- Involve the local community and key stakeholders in the design process to engender community support and ownership of the CBD's public spaces.



The first town plan of Bairnsdale

Department of Crown Lands and Survey 1885

SNAP SHOT OF BAIRNSDALE

Bairnsdale Township

Bairnsdale is located within East Gippsland Shire which stretches from Stratford to the Victorian/New South Wales state border and north to Omeo.

The township was established in the 1860's above the flood plains of the Mitchell River. It is a defined area as it is contained by the Mitchell River floodplain on three boundaries.

The town enjoys a wonderful setting created by the natural landscape features of the Mitchell River, is surrounded by an agricultural hinterland and is the "gateway" location to the Gippsland Lakes.

Bairnsdale was planned as a 'pastoral' town in the British Colonial tradition with a wide central boulevard lined with mature trees and surrounding streets laid out in a grid pattern.

It is one of a select group of regional towns, remembered and recognised for their historic main street central gardens, which act as a linear spine and main focal point for people arriving and departing the city.

Today Bairnsdale has a resident population of approximately 13,000 people. The city has a compact centre that acts as the main service centre for East Gippsland Shire's 42,000 residents, providing retail and business services, health and community support, educational opportunities, arts and cultural activities.

The study area



THE STUDY AREA

The study area is the main central business district (CBD) with a focus on the core retail area. The extent of the CBD and core retail areas, is indicated on the map above.

The CBD is highly accessible and legible due to the clear grid pattern of local streets with the Princes Highway (Main Street) forming the central spine. Main Street forms a wide boulevard that divides the town into two core precincts, located north and south of the central spine.

PRIMARY CHARACTERISTICS OF BAIRNSDALE

The principal activity areas in the central business district (CBD) are concentrated along Main Street, with the main retail activities of Nicholson Street Mall on the north side. The focus of the south side tends to be service activities and peripheral sales. The CBD has the following characteristics:

- A strong and consistent street grid system defining large blocks of 200m x 90m long.
- Generous street widths of 30 metres, while Main Street is 60 metres wide.

- Laneways located mid-block servicing the buildings fronting the principal streets.
- Primary retail and commercial activities focussed upon Main Street and Nicholson Street.
- A diverse range of retail activities with extensive off-street and on-street parking.
- Princes Highway (Main Street) is a national arterial highway carrying local and regional traffic through the township.
- The topography of the township falls towards Mitchell River and in Riverine St, it falls steeply as an embankment to the river flats below.
- The incised Mitchell River valley forms a flood plain to the south east of the CBD where the fall of land is more gradual.
- The Bairnsdale Rail Station is located to the southeast of the study area. The station is an important public transport hub to Melbourne with the bus interchange taking passengers to the east.

2 CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS



Laneway activation: Cadiz,
Spain



"[Bairnsdale] has never seemed other than a country town,
typical and unique at the same time"

Hal Porter, Bairnsdale: *Portrait of An Australian Country Town*



*Working with
the community
to re-image
Bairnsdale*

HOW WAS THE MASTERPLAN PREPARED?

Prior to the commencement of the Masterplan project, an extensive amount of strategic work and consultation activities had already been undertaken by the Shire and other agencies such as VicRoads. The feedback from this work led to the following methodology being used to prepare this Masterplan document:

- Literature review of current policies and strategies affecting the public realm in Bairnsdale.
- Site analysis – an assessment of the existing site conditions of the study area, including vegetation, street furniture, paving and how people use the area.
- Identification of the constraints and potential opportunities for developing and upgrading the CBD.
- Socio-economic analysis – analysis of existing and future residential, tourist and employment populations.
- Ideas and Issues workshop with key stakeholders – the Bairnsdale CBD Reference Group, Council and community members.
- Discussions with local businesses and traders, particularly those facing the Main Street Mall and the laneways.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK

There is a strong sense of “ownership” of the Bairnsdale Township by its citizens. This manifests itself in all sorts of ways. When there is a flood or a fire, the town pulls together. The community’s commitment to the town and its activities is demonstrated by a high level of volunteerism. Sporting events, festivals, marathons and bike rides are just a few of the activities that are run by committed residents of the town and district.

In preparing the masterplan, the voices of the community were given a variety of opportunities to be heard. Community feedback came through various channels:

- The Re-imagining Bairnsdale blog.
- Feedback forms.
- Letters and emails to Council and the consultant team.
- Discussions with traders and local businesses.
- Discussions with taxi companies regarding relocation of Bairnsdale taxi rank.
- Discussions with Woolworths.
- Council staff community briefings over a weekend at the ‘Field Days’.
- Council staff community ‘listening posts’ in the Mall over 4 days.

Bairnsdale yesterday

Main Street circa 1900,
East Gippsland Historical
Society



- Discussions with local Bairnsdale Primary School 754 through the children's voices program to get an insight into what primary school aged children like/dislike about Bairnsdale.

As a result of the community consultation processes, Council and the consultant team received some very constructive feedback that helped inform the Masterplan project. The collective comments have been critical in the development and refinement of the Masterplanning process.

"I like the potential that the mall has to host things like night markets, live music, young people doing crazy creative things...I would like the space to be able to be flexible, to grow and change as Bairnsdale and its people evolve." Julie Skuja, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog

Based on the on-line survey results, the most important features the community wanted to see in Bairnsdale's key public spaces were informal gathering spaces and children's facilities followed closely by public art and weather protection (see graph over page).

Other suggestions included better pavement surfaces, seating, planting of 'feature trees' and public toilets.

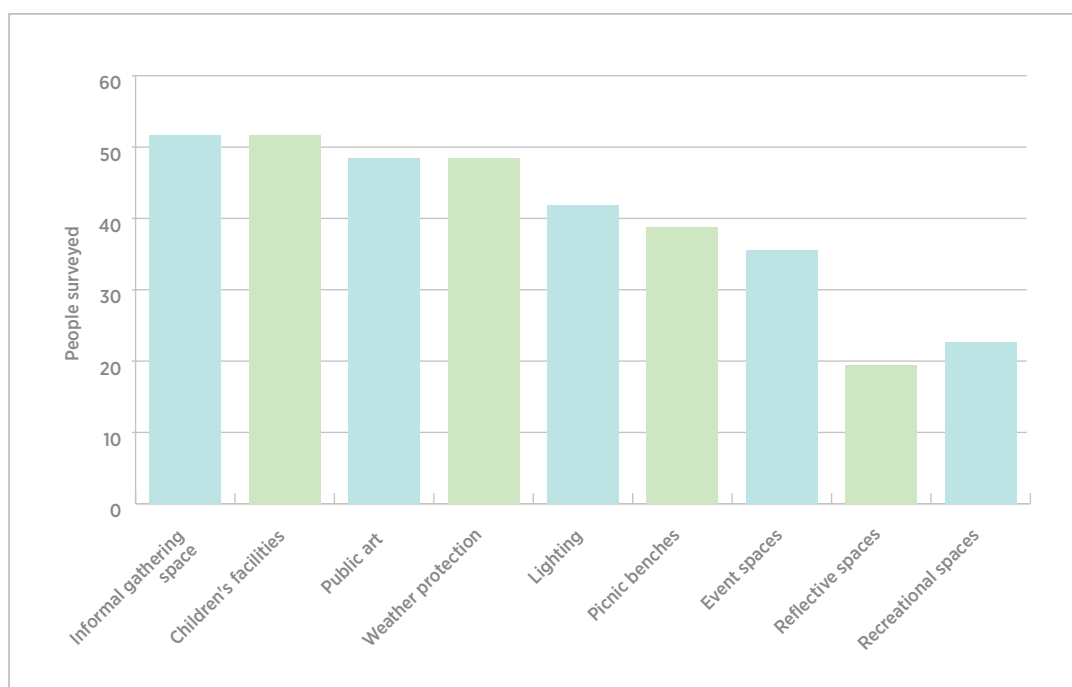
In addition, the community rated improved pedestrian safety, a family friendly environment and better pedestrian linkages as the most important outcomes for the project.

When asked what community events people would like to see in Main Street gardens or the Nicholson Street Mall, suggestions ranged from music events, buskers and markets to activities for families and young children as well as exhibitions and celebration of important events such as Anzac Day, Australia Day and Remembrance Day.

Suggestions for how children could use the new spaces and how to reinforce a family friendly environment included:

- Creating inviting playgrounds;
- Baby/children's toilet facilities;
- BBQ and picnic areas in the gardens;
- 'Snakes and Ladders' game in the gardens; and
- Child focused events in the Rotunda.

These elements have been considered in the masterplan.



Community comment on the most important features in the public realm

"Green spaces...things at eye-level for kids....places for seniors to sit in the sun and yarn...colour and quirkiness...pieces of local art...posies to park our bikes...not too many signs telling us what we can't do...keeping it litter free..." Louise, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog.

"It would be good to have a versatile outdoor performance space like an inground amphitheatre in the mall that also doubles as a community place people can sit and eat lunch." Rachel, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS REGARDING THE MAIN STREET GARDENS

Summary of Community comments	Suggested actions
- Create small pockets of interest and intimate spaces - Small coffee and café kiosk - Create new community gathering space for outdoor performances etc. - Water tower should be turned into an attraction, create a lit frame around the water tower. - Use native plants - Replace dead or dying trees	Remodel toilets and kiosk Provide a new community space in place of the current toilet block New planting regime proposed

COMMUNITY COMMENTS REGARDING THE MALL

Summary of Community comments	Suggested actions
- Install public toilets. - Improve/level pavement surfaces. - Create safe and enclosed space for children. - An extended, traffic free mall and encourage more foot traffic. - Feels unsafe at night. - Provide canopy protection. - Revamp seating. - Create night life in the area - 'Restaurant Row' to promote music, performing arts, Sunday markets, independent art and craft stalls.	Provide new toilets Provide new seating Level surfaces with new non-slip paving New canopy structure proposed New planting and street trees

Temporary origami artwork in public space

By Mademoiselle Maurice



Source: <http://www.designboom.com/weblog/cat/10/view/22575/mademoiselle-maurice-urban-origami-installations.html>

"One of Bairnsdale's unique attributes is its beautiful location next to the Mitchell River. More amenities need to be place on this side of town to attract people." Abby, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog.

"Love the Alleyways and see them as essential dimension to the picture of Bairnsdale CBD – an opportunity not a problem..." Sue, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS REGARDING THE MITCHELL RIVER AND ACCESS

Summary of Community comments	Suggested actions
- Improve pedestrian access. - Stairs/ramps for pedestrians behind Court House and Art gallery. - Install signage/mileage markers. - Up-grade or replace the public pavilion area. <i>'...it always feels dark and oppressive...add more seating/tables'</i> Kerry, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog <i>"I would feel quite safe walking to the river if there was a proper pedestrian access..."</i> Peter, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog <i>"This is a great space for a new playground and/or interactive landscape"</i>	- Provide a pedestrian path to river from Riverine St p - Renovate Old Mill structure - Propose a Lookout platform on Riverine St - New signage and furniture elements (to suit natural environment setting) to be incorporate in any future works.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS REGARDING THE LANEWAYS

Summary of Community comments	Suggested Actions
- Dangerous, attract antisocial behaviour, broken glass. - Uneven surfaces, full of cars. - Improve surfaces, drainage. - Encourage and support business to set up and stay. - Encourage murals, art work. - Retain important aspects of their service function. <i>"Alley behind Woolworths needs some art on the walls and so do many other areas"</i> Chris, Reimagining Bairnsdale blog.	- Laneways activation program recommended. - Art installation to Woolworths wall or nearby site proposed - Physical upgrade (paving, landscaping, public art) proposed to lane adjacent to Woolworths loading dock proposed

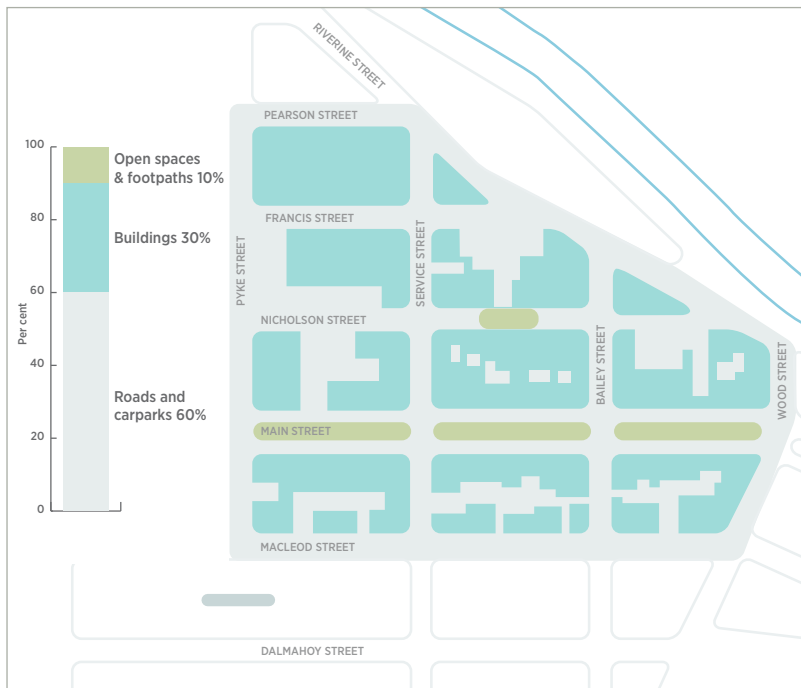
3 WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CBD CHALLENGES?





"... of all the principles and methods available for reinforcing life in cities, inviting people to spend more time is the simplest and most effective".

Cities for People, Jan Gehl



WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHALLENGES

The major challenges facing the city are;

- Diversity is lacking in the public realm
- People need to be encouraged to leave their car and walk around the core area
- Pedestrian circulation routes need to be improved, better connected and more clearly identified
- More activities are needed in the town after 5pm especially
- The Nicholson Street Mall needs to be rebuilt
- The Main Street Gardens could be improved with better pedestrian connections and new public spaces
- Entry points to the core could be celebrated more distinctively
- Laneways could be activated, better paved and better connected to the popular destinations of the town
- Public art and cultural activities will help distinguish the unique characteristics of the town
- Connections could be improved between the town centre and the river
- The streetscapes need extensive planting and improved and consistent paving.

DIVERSITY IS LACKING IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Public life in cities and towns has changed over the past 50 years. Where once the city core was a place of exchange and interaction for the necessities of life, the motor car, the internet and specialised retail precincts, often outside the core, have diluted the primacy of the town centre. 'Optional' activities like coffee at an outdoor cafe, reading a newspaper, visiting a gallery and cultural events or even just window shopping are now the activities that bring life to the city centre. People are not spending a long time in Bairnsdale city centre and their activities tend to be the same every time they visit with shopping as a predominant activity.

While Bairnsdale is fortunate that its supermarkets remain in the core as do a large number of its key retailers, it is the 'optional activities' that need encouragement and they only take place where there is **quality** in the urban environment. Bairnsdale's public spaces are worn down and in need of revitalisation and new thinking. Children playing are good indicators of a city that has been created for all users. Public spaces require additional features in order to invite children and elderly people to use them. They do not need to be organised as a playground but they do need to be designed with children in mind. Spaces in Bairnsdale's city centre do not have this quality.

Right: Illustrative plan indicating space devoted to cars and buildings

Top right: Central median car parking

Bottom left: Main Street as a public space in former days

Creating a vibrant city centre

Top left: In need of a car parking strategy

Bottom left: Mall deserted after 6pm

Right: Good lighting makes a difference



East Gippsland Shire has identified and is proceeding to build three catalyst projects in 2013, that will redefine the perception of the public space of the core and attract a variety of users. They are the Nicholson Street Mall, the Library and the Main Street gardens.

ATTACHMENT TO THE MOTOR CAR

In the era of the horse and cart and Bairnsdale's first settlement the streets were public realm space that would be readily used by people for a variety of purposes.

You could stand and walk in the street and feel quite safe. Everything moved slowly, people, horses and carts. But as motor cars gradually got faster and faster and there were more of them, we surrendered the streets that were once a public realm serving a diversity of purposes to the sole use of the motor car and in doing that we gave up a communal asset effectively making it a private asset.

Currently 60% of Bairnsdale's public realm is dedicated to cars and parking with only 10% dedicated to open space and footpaths for people to walk, stand, sit and talk. The Princess Highway (Main Street) forms a central spine through the centre effectively dividing the retailing area to the north and the service/business and peripheral retailing area to the south. The street acts more as a barrier than an element of cohesion in the centre of town.

In Bairnsdale, like so many country towns, there has been a diminution of the use of public space for gathering and walking that has been replaced by circulating and parked cars. Bairnsdale has a highly accessible grid of wide streets and plenty of parking spaces. Given it is the regional capital of a largely rural hinterland it is a great place to drive the 4WD around and collect irrigation equipment, fence wire, a spare battery and then the weeks groceries and more.

The local population use it in the same way. There are very few bicycle hoops and poor pedestrian connections. The linear pathways in the Main Street gardens have been replanted over the years to facilitate cross street movement rather than encourage walking along the length of its spine.

While there is recognition of the ongoing need for the use of cars in the Bairnsdale CBD the aim is to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience both in terms of safety and enjoyment. The intention is to give flexibility and more choice in the means by which people move in and around the CBD.

Initiatives to tame the place of motor vehicles include:

- Slowing traffic through the town
- Creating pleasant streetscapes that encourage people to walk and cycle along as well as linger
- Closing the motor vehicle access ways that run mid-block in the Main Street gardens (between Service and Bailey Streets)



I can see the trees in Main St but how do I get there?

- Redefining the laneway widths along Main Street to give easier door openings to the street
- Introducing a parking strategy to reduce long term parking in the core retail area of the town
- Encouraging owners and traders to open their shops to the laneways and remove their cars which take up valuable real estate
- There are many access routes through laneways or access through shops or businesses to rear laneways or streets that are not highlighted as potential pedestrian access routes. This contributes to the lack of permeability of the streetscape.
- Where there are laneway connections to adjoining streets through businesses, access is provided only during business hours, restricting use and the potential for passive surveillance after hours and discouraging use.

POOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Main Street forms a central spine through the CBD, effectively dividing the function and activity of the CBD into a northern retail area and a southern service/business and peripheral retail area. The street acts more as a barrier or division rather than an element of cohesion in the centre of town.

To get people out of their cars, they need to have an experience that is enjoyable and safe and that means creating diversity in the public realm.

Observations in relation to vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation are as follows:

- Lack of permeability in the street grid for pedestrians to determine easily accessible and efficient routes to destination points.
- Poor pedestrian connections between public spaces and retail areas.
- The laneway from the rear of Paperchase/Lanteri's along side Woolworths, to Nicholson Street, is used as a daytime pedestrian connection between Main Street and Nicholson Street. It needs to be improved and activated.
- Similarly; there is potential for using the lane along the east side of Woolworths to improve pedestrian circulation and connection to Main Street. It also needs to be improved and activated.
- Lack of lighting in laneways, pedestrian connection routes and the Gardens discourages use after hours or night use and restricts opportunities for passive surveillance.
- There are a range of pavement treatments and some are in a poor state of repair. The grades, drainage and condition of many pedestrian and parking areas within the city core could be improved to ensure DDA compliance to provide even, level surfaces that will improve accessibility.

Improving connections

Top left: There is no pathway through Main St Gardens east to west to encourage pedestrians

Bottom left: Improve cycle connections to and through the CBD

Right: Open up laneways to shorten pedestrian connection from Main St Gardens to Mall



- Parking dominates in some laneways, discouraging pedestrian access.
- Poorly defined parking areas located at the rear of some businesses or spaces do not encourage pedestrian circulation or usage through laneways or rear streets.
- Currently there is no direct visual or physical access, encouraging people to move towards the Gardens from the Mall, despite the fact they are only 100m apart. There is potential for laneways to be used to shorten pedestrian connection to the Gardens.
- The Main Street Gardens have been replanted over the years to facilitate more efficient cross street movement (i.e. north/south movement) by pedestrians. There is a need to encourage walking through the Gardens from east to west on a linear path system.
- There are no clearly defined bike routes connecting to or through the CBD and to key activity areas beyond the CBD as indicated on the Existing Cycle Path network plan.
- There are very few defined bicycle parking areas or bike hoops provided within the CBD, discouraging cycle use.
- There are limited shade and shelter areas provided along pedestrian routes.
- It is pleasant to walk through the Main St Gardens-The Gardens provide a refuge from the busy retail/business area, are shady and amenity is provided by the "green" lush lawn and trees.
- The major public/key historic buildings provide landmarks and key navigational indicators within the streetscape, to guide pedestrian and vehicular circulation through the CBD.



A quiet city after dark – where are the people?

WAYFINDING IN THE CBD

The lack of clear and adequate directional and information signage within the CBD is one of the factors that inhibits walkability in the CBD. Council has addressed this by commissioning and implementing a Walkability and Wayfinding Strategy for Bairnsdale. The recommendations of the “*Walking and Wayfinding in the Bairnsdale CBD report*” can be summarised as:

- Develop a new “Bairnsdale/East Gippsland Family of Signs”;
- Develop a new hand-held map covering the CBD including linkages to the Mitchell River walks and the Rail Trail;
- Rationalise existing signage in the CBD and obsolete signage is to be removed, relocated or amended.
- Maintain all existing footpaths so they are flat and even. Undertake repairs and install new footpaths as required. Extend footpaths as ‘Continuous paths of travel’ (CPT) over some roads to improve safety and access.
- Improve pedestrian capacity to cross roads; (a) at traffic lights and pedestrian operated signals; (b) at locations where it is difficult to do so, i.e. outside the station and at Wood/Macleod Streets. Reduce the signed traffic speed at the densely used shopping areas.
- Improve the general amenity on streets and public places and public safety and amenity in car parks.

- Support and encourage the expansion and development of the local public transport system. Promote walking for transport through programs and events.

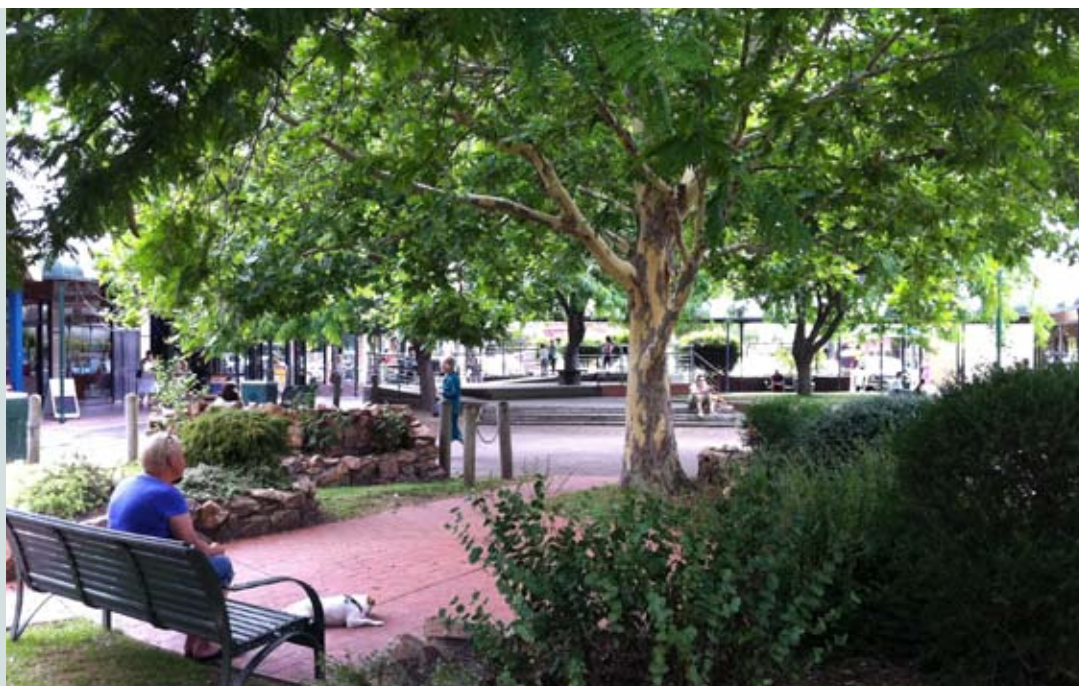
Council are currently in the process of implementing the wayfinding strategies within the CBD and this is endorsed in the Masterplan.

A QUIET CITY AFTER DARK

In smaller towns and cities such as Bairnsdale the task is to create quality but also vitality in the urban environment. Activity and ‘street life’ in Bairnsdale is virtually non-existent after 5pm. Places that are open, such as the cinema, OzMex, Riversleigh and Thai Monsoon are not very visible. While physical improvements to a jaded outdoor mall will assist, creating enjoyable public spaces for the community involves ‘cultural and activity planning’ as part of a larger strategy for urban and community development.

Bairnsdale’s night time economy is limited. While lauded as the ‘Gateway to the Gippsland Lakes’ Bairnsdale also has to compete against the natural beauty of surrounding lakeside towns such as Paynesville, Metung and Lakes Entrance which have restaurants and pubs that are more likely to attract visitors and residents in the evening.

There is a need to work with those who already trade beyond 5pm to find a more collective critical mass of activity and events.



NICHOLSON STREET MALL

The Nicholson Street Mall is the only pedestrian mall in Bairnsdale. It is contained between Bailey Street to the east and the edge of Woolworth's supermarket and a car park to the west. The Mall is one of the key priority areas identified in the project Brief for upgrade and development. Observations about the Nicholson St Mall are as follows:

- Lack of toilet facilities.
- Poor legibility (understanding of how to “read” or navigate a space), clear views across the Mall and connections to adjoining areas. This in turn, highlights the lack of passive surveillance opportunities and concern regarding public safety.
- Poor drainage along the pedestrian areas which leads to pooling of runoff which may be a safety issue at times.
- Lack of visual amenity due to patchwork of repaired paving, inconsistent use of paving materials, the presence of elements such as shopping trolley bays, overgrown garden areas and limited maintenance, do not encourage pedestrian use and limit opportunities for passive surveillance.
- The paving materials are dated, require upgrading and a “fresh”, contemporary image.
- Street furniture and shade structures are in poor condition and are unattractive.
- Limited space is available for informal gathering areas and social interaction.

- There are no public art or elements to enliven the Mall and add interest or encourage use of the Mall.
- Inactive street frontages and poor amenity, blank walls, presence of elements such as shopping trolley bays (in particular, shopping trolleys line edge of Mall in front of Woolworths), do not encourage public use. These elements may also restrict passive surveillance opportunities.

THE MAIN STREET GARDENS

The Main Street Gardens are a linear public open space located along Main Street. This public open space is a major asset to Bairnsdale and one of its defining landmarks. It plays an important role in welcoming visitors to the town and provides a pleasant vegetated backdrop to the town environment. The Gardens are very well maintained, provide a positive image and character for the town and are a symbol of civic pride and ability.

The Gardens are one of the key priority areas identified in the project Brief for upgrade and development. Observations about the Main Street Gardens are as follows:

- Main Street has gradually been disconnected from the Gardens over the years, due to the increased use of vehicles and focus on efficient traffic circulation.



*Main Street
Gardens: Key
priority area for
rejuvenation*

- The Gardens are an underutilised space and are not seen as a destination or part of a journey through the CBD.
- There is no consistent vegetation theme or character within the Gardens, reducing the amenity of the Gardens.
- There is high maintenance planting along Main St perimeters.
- No clearly defined entry and exit points and connections to adjoining pedestrian pathways.
- Poor visual and physical connection with nearby, key public realm spaces such as Nicholson Street Mall.
- Lack of physical and visual amenity due to the uneven paving and pathways, inconsistent paving materials and furniture themes and out dated furniture.
- Clutter of signage is confusing and visually obtrusive and detracts from the surrounds.
- Lack of event facilities or spaces for gathering for events.
- Limited facilities for children's play.
- The presence of the power lines along the Gardens western side has resulted in the pollarding of the perimeter avenue trees, reducing the significance of the tree avenue.
- There is no central pathway through the Gardens, limiting opportunities for passive recreation and pedestrian circulation within the Gardens.
- The lack of a central pathway has forced pedestrians to the edges of the Gardens, discouraging use.
- Access to, and the location of the central public toilets is not clearly defined or highlighted.
- The toilet block is set into the landscape and is partially screened by hedging. While partial screening of the toilet block has been successful, the visually obtrusive brick colour and building form still dominate the space;
- The partial screening of the toilet block and placement of the toilet block within the space, provide limited opportunities for passive surveillance of the area.
- The paved forecourt in front of the toilet block does provide seating and a meeting area however this may encourage people to linger thus increasing the sense of unease and perceived lack of safety.
- There is limited furniture available, discouraging use.

Simple
re-paving would
help pedestrian
access



ENTRY POINTS AND LANDMARKS

A sense of arrival in the town centre is important to visitors, traders and residents. At present, arrival at the ‘core’ of the town is not clear and gives purpose to the intention to improve the quality of the Main Street Gardens between Bailey and Service Streets.

In Bairnsdale, a journey along Main Street sends several cues that you have arrived at or near the town centre, St Mary’s Church and the water tower which are tall and imposing highlight the historical and social context of the town.

Other prominent landmarks including historical buildings within the study area are;

- the historic band rotunda in Main Street
- the Court House, and
- the Art Gallery in Nicholson Street
- the library in Service Street
- Bairnsdale regional train station in MacLeod Street.

The current Post Office at the corner of Nicholson and Bailey Streets is seen as an unattractive building and a poor “entry” point into the CBD from the north and west.

LANEWAYS

The Laneways within the CBD are often forgotten spaces. Many laneways are located in prime locations close to busy streets and shopping precincts.

Currently laneways are generally used as delivery routes for businesses and for informal parking. Some laneways widen into an open area behind shops and businesses.

There are some existing connections via Campbells Arcade and through some of the coffee shops and banks, however these connections are limited to business hours and open onto a laneway system that is full of parked cars and poorly paved.

Current issues include:

- Laneways and arcades are underutilised assets
- Poor amenity
- Lack of consistent surface treatments with some in gravel and some asphalt.
- Uneven paving and poor drainage
- Spaces dominated by parked cars and delivery vehicles
- Poor signage/wayfinding
- Poor or no lighting
- Blank walls contributing to the lack of visual amenity.
- Intimidating at night – lack of safety
- Poor surveillance opportunities and undesirable activity



Celebrate what is unique and distinctive

Top left: Rope playground installation Carlsberg brewery site, Copenhagen

Top right: Pop-up cafe, Melbourne

Bottom right: Closure of street for community events

CULTURE AND PUBLIC PLACES

In a small town it is difficult to get the range of expertise that the 'creative industries' of the big city can bring to bear on issues of urban design. The consequence is that solutions from other places are sometimes adopted from another context and applied locally in an unwise manner. This can range from losing locally designed engineering details like brick guttering from another era to be replaced with generic concrete kerb.

Bairnsdale, like many regional centres, has also suffered the loss of some splendid heritage buildings that have been replaced by structures that will never be 'celebrated'. Managing the heritage of a town as well as the introduction of new buildings requires skillful design and assessment.

As part of this masterplan process there is a significant opportunity to develop a cultural arts programme across the city core which can be employed in different ways – permanent design features reflecting the rich heritage of the place; ephemeral events and semi-permanent or recurrent events such as installations, augmented and changed over time.

There is also an opportunity to collaborate with the East Gippsland Aboriginal Arts Corporation and the Krowathunkooloong (Keeping Place) East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative to tell the story of the region's history through public art.

There are many signifiers in the cultural landscape history of Bairnsdale that could form the basis of a public arts programme. Successful public art work can assist wayfinding for pedestrians. It can also help animate places and create another layer of meaning to a public place. A public arts programme for Bairnsdale CBD would encourage artists to draw from the social and physical history, the local climate and future vision of the place.

Improving connections

Top left: A crowded river bank

Top right: Still an enjoyable picnic spot

Bottom: How do I walk to the river?



LOW DENSITY OF RESIDENTS IN THE CENTRE

The residential housing stock in Bairnsdale is characteristic of a regional town with low density, single detached dwellings on large suburban lots and the peripheral areas supporting larger lots, low density and rural living opportunities.

There is limited medium density infill development in the established city core which contributes to the lack of activity and street life in the evening.

Census analysis of the type of dwellings in Bairnsdale in 2011 shows 79.8% were separate houses and only 19% were medium density dwellings. Given that lone person households are the predominant household type (35.7%), opportunities to live in a unit or smaller house in town, near key services are limited.

In addition Bairnsdale has an ageing population. It is important for older residents to feel connected to established social, recreation and medical networks. For many the limited supply of small independent or assisted care housing types in town is forcing people to remain in houses that no longer suit their needs and are located a distance from the town centre.

The Bairnsdale CBD has the ability to offer and absorb quite diverse and different medium and higher density housing opportunities that will help give life to the city.

WEAK CONNECTIONS TO THE RIVER

In the 1850s and 1860s Bairnsdale grew as a result of its location on the Mitchell River and its access to the sea. It became a supply port for the East Gippsland goldfields until the railways were established later in the century. The river was also an important location to the Gunai/Kurnai nation, especially Brabuwooloong and the Brayakuloong people of central Gippsland.

In the Victorian River Health Strategy (2002), the Mitchell River is recognised as one of only two large rivers in Victoria that stand out because of their high conservation value, high level of naturalness of flows, relative intactness of the entire river system, and significance for larger systems (the Gippsland Lakes).

The Mitchell River is an important open space corridor and river system located close to the township and is a tourist attraction. It also has links to the social, cultural and historical beginnings of the town as well as indigenous cultural elements. Observations regarding access and connection to the River corridor are as follows:

- Lack of visual and physical connection to the river.
- Limited seating available for use.
- There is only one road down to the River flats from the CBD.



*Strong tradition
of tree planting
in Bairnsdale*

- There is no separation between vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic.
- The river embankment is a physical barrier and is difficult to negotiate as there is no safe, defined pedestrian path leading down to the River from the CBD.
- Small, dirt, 'goat tracks' are visible down the embankment, made by people taking a shortcut. The tracks compact the ground surface, restricting vegetation growth and cover along the embankment and are visually unappealing.
- There are no visual indicators or viewing points down the River flats that encourage access or exploration of the river corridor.
- Challenging topographical condition.
- Out-dated facilities
- Poor lighting and wayfinding/signage
- Limited activity
- Safety is an issue, particularly at night.
- Private ownership of river front land along Riverine Street.
- Managing competing interests including private land owners and other public land managers.
- The River environs are used informally during the day time by people having lunch, informal activities such as walking, family gatherings, as a meeting place, for activities such as informal sporting activities, running, etc.

The river as a 'place' is currently underutilised.

There is a great opportunity for a more diversified public space along the river that incorporates strong linkages to the art gallery and the CBD in general.

Activities such as music and arts events, active and passive recreation activities and school/community events could benefit from the beautiful riverside setting.

VEGETATION AND STREETScape CHARACTER

There is a strong tradition of planting in the township, as is evident in the Main Street Gardens and the avenue tree planting along road corridors. The city has a diversity of mature, specimen and avenue trees both exotic and native species which are a significant asset for the town. However the town lacks a unified and consistent landscape and streetscape character.

Whilst some streets have established tree planting, others are devoid of planting, creating, at times, a harsh streetscape that has limited opportunities for shade, wind protection and visual amenity. Trees enhance the setting of a country town.

Observations in relation to the existing vegetation and streetscape character are as follows:

- There is an inconsistent vegetation character within the city core.
- Some streets are consistently planted with one, or a specific mix of tree species, however there are often gaps in the street tree planting, which should be infilled to ensure a greater impact.

Overhead
powerlines limit
tree planting on
Main Street

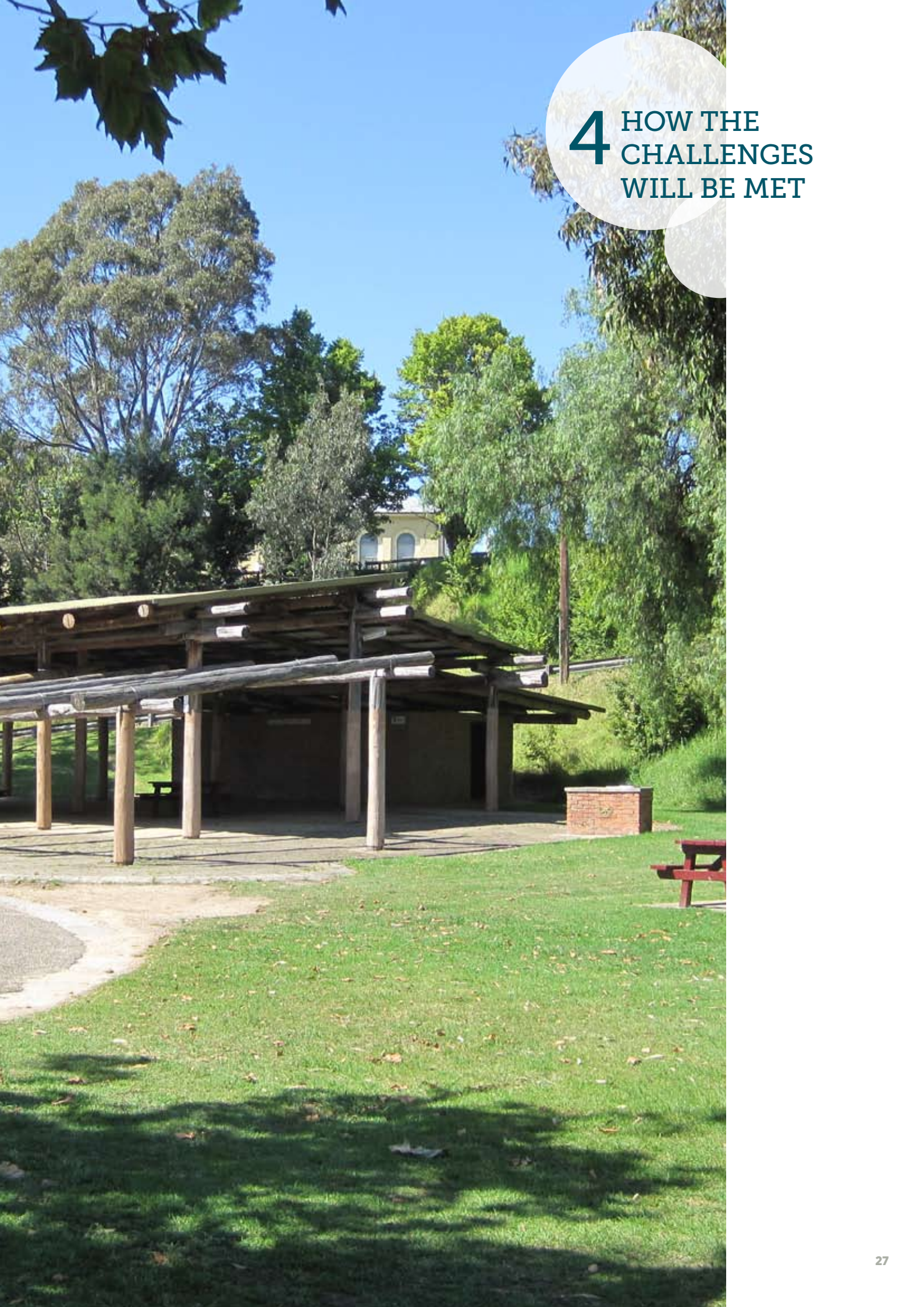


- Occasionally planting of trees along some street sections is prevented by streetscape elements, such as verandahs that extend over the footpath, pedestrian crossings, power poles, services (such as drainage pits and substations) and parking bays.
- Some street trees are planted within the centre median or at intervals along the central parking bays. This planting contributes positively to the vegetated character of the streetscape.
- Some areas have planting beds of annuals and perennials particularly the Main Street Gardens, which have high watering and maintenance requirements.
- There are a large proportion of deciduous trees planted.
- Trees within the public realm are in varying stages of health and require assessment by an arborist to determine the safety and viability of these trees.
- The presence of overhead power lines limit the planting of significant tree species in some areas, particularly along the north side of Main Street.
- The strong and consistent avenue planting along the northern and southern perimeters of the Main Street Gardens, has been diluted by the introduction of other tree species, diminishing the strong, formal vegetated character of the streetscape.

STREETSCAPE FURNITURE ELEMENTS

Observations regarding the existing furniture elements are as follows:

- There is a lack of consistent furniture styles, materials and themes within the CBD, contributing to the lack of legibility and orientation within the streetscape and public realm.
- The lack of furniture themes emphasises the limited amenity, discouraging use and perhaps the public from meeting or social interaction along the streetscape and public realm.
- The existing furniture themes and materials do not complement the existing built form or streetscape character, reducing amenity within the streetscape or space.
- The existing furniture styles and materials are generally “tired” and require upgrading.



4 HOW THE CHALLENGES WILL BE MET

A photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there's a paved sidewalk with a raised planter bed containing a young tree. To the left, an outdoor cafe seating area with brown chairs and tables is set on a green artificial turf mat. A person is walking across the street in the background. The scene is lined with mature trees and a clear sky.

To generate exuberant diversity in the city's streets and districts few conditions are indispensable;

- 1 The district, and indeed as many of its internal parts as possible, must serve more than one primary function, preferably more than two...
- 2 Most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent.
- 3 The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old ones so that they vary in the economic yield they must produce. This mingling must be fairly close grained.
- 4 There must be a sufficiently dense concentration of people for whatever purpose they may be there.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*



*A 'cool place'
in summer and
winter*

Main Street Gardens,
Bairnsdale

To meet these challenges the Masterplan provides a clear strategic vision which is expressed through 3 threads:

Renewal:

- A programme of catalyst infrastructure works

Improvement Strategies:

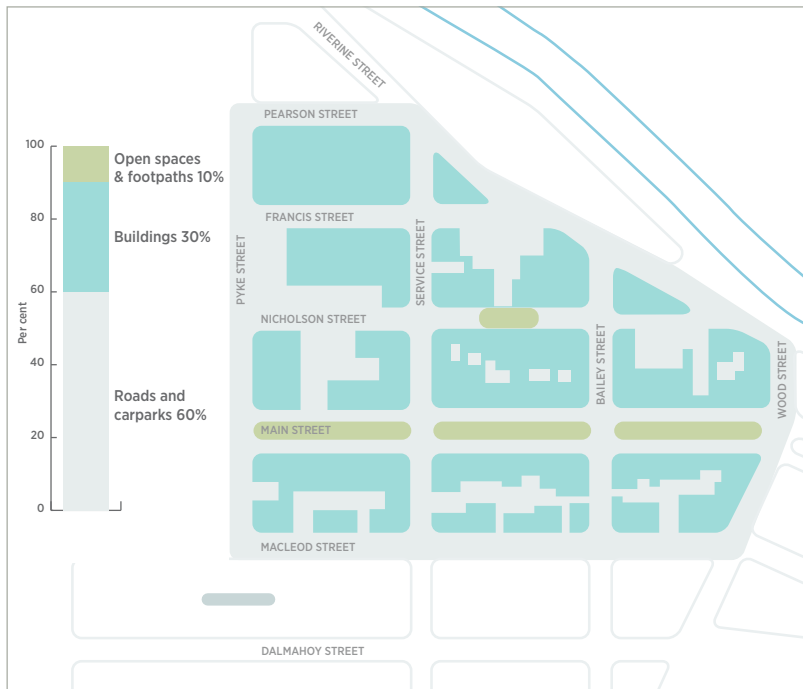
- Incremental public and private works such as greening Bairnsdale streets

Programme of activities:

- Encouraging diverse and regular activities in the core

Put simply, there is a programme of immediate building works which will be reinforced by longer term infrastructure programmes and cultural planning initiatives. It will take time to achieve the vision outlined in this report and no doubt elements of it will change as local circumstances also change. To create a liveable and sustainable town centre, walkability and connection are the primary objectives. This can be achieved in Bairnsdale by implementing a number of measures but mainly by:

- Taming the place of vehicles
- Increasing the connections of the public realm spaces particularly for pedestrians
- Extending and enhancing the quality of public spaces
- Encouraging activity and diversity in the city core
- Supporting infill and shop-top housing
- Activating frontages in the retail heart
- Creating a stronger connection to the River.



Left: Space devoted to cars

Top right: Cars, cars, cars

Bottom right: People, people, people

TAME THE PLACE OF VEHICLES

Initiatives to tame the place of vehicles will include:

- Slowing traffic through the town;
- Creating pleasant streetscapes that encourage people to walk and cycle along as well as linger;
- Closing the vehicular access ways that run mid-block in the Main Street gardens (between Service and Bailey Streets);
- Redefining the laneway widths along Main Street to give easier door openings to the street;
- Introducing a parking strategy to reduce long term parking in the core retail area of the town;
- Encouraging owners and traders to open their shops to the laneways and to remove their cars from the laneways.



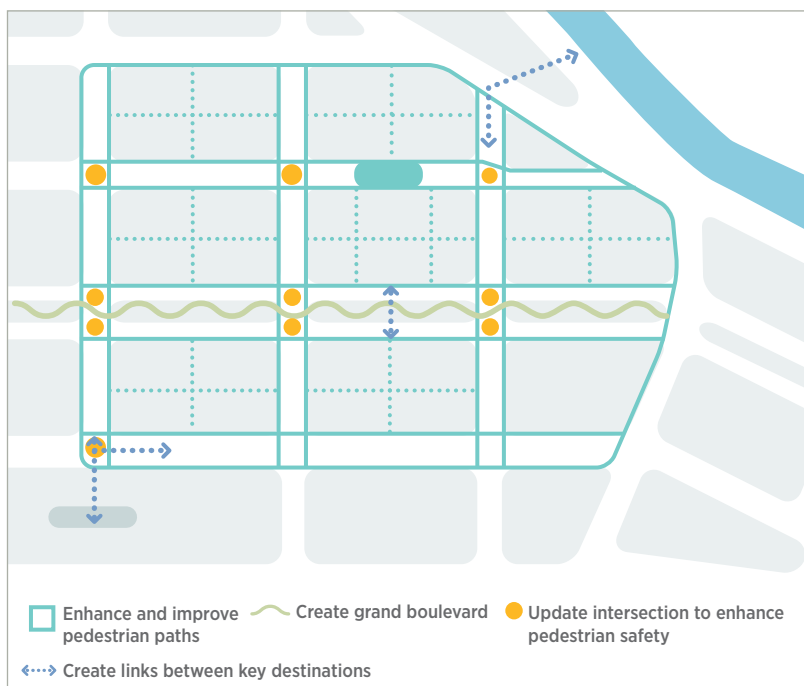
IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE CONNECTIONS

Cities and towns that are walkable and connected generally enjoy a reputation for high levels of liveability. Equally these places are also regarded as productive in terms of their local economy.

Pedestrians and cyclists are the most vulnerable users of the street. The hierarchy of street users in any urban area should prioritise pedestrians first, cyclists second and car users third.

If the Bairnsdale town centre is analysed for its potential walkability and connection it is clear that this can be achieved with relative ease. It does not require large scale interventions like some cities because, apart from the through traffic in the main street, there are no significant barriers.

It just requires improved connections for pedestrians, better way finding, increased activity and the building of quality spaces.

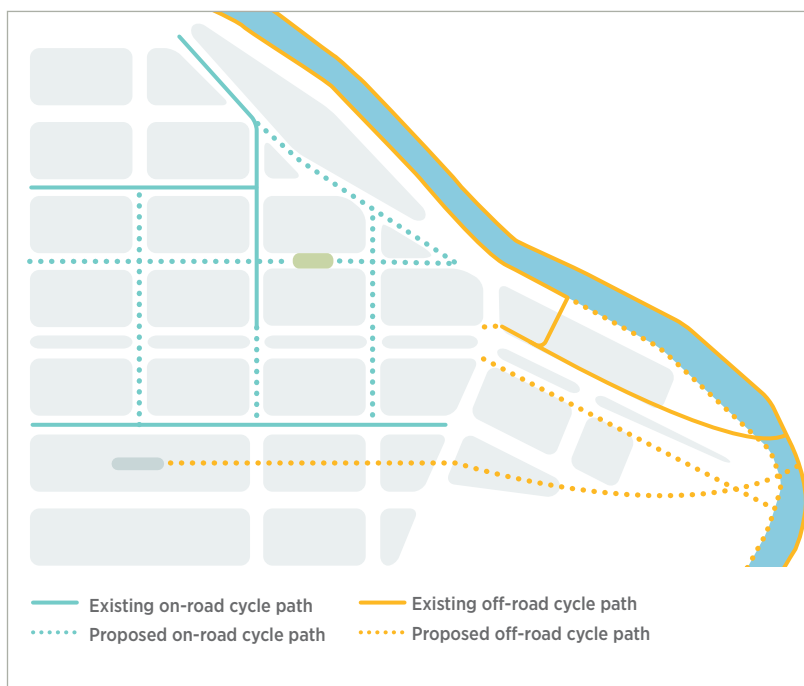


If we add to this the locations where activity at both a large and small scale should be concentrated the desire to walk, linger and feel safe is enhanced.

The principal 'long desire line' is from the rail station where patronage has risen from 400,000 passengers per annum to over 1 million, through the street grid and lanes to Main Street and then onto Nicholson Street and the Mall and then to the river.

A major 'short desire line' is from the 'core' Main Street gardens between Bailey and Service Streets to the Mall in Nicholson Street via the laneway network.

If one walks from the rail station down Pyke or Service Streets to the Main Street gardens and then down through the gardens it is a very pleasant walk especially on a summer's day. But it is awkward to navigate. There is no central pathway through the gardens as there once was. In former times a path wound its way around planting beds and memorials and led one to the Rotunda where the town band would practice and entertain the crowd.



Top right: Main Street Gardens with central pathway

Bottom right: A Mall in need of renewal

Top left: Proposed walking network

Bottom left: Proposed cycle network

Left: Solitary spaces

Top right: Solitary arcade

Bottom right: Solitary vehicles



Today there is no central pathway system. The planting and the pedestrian crossings are designed to force pedestrians to the outer edges of the gardens and to limit movements primarily to cross street movements. The toilets are half submerged and screened making them feel slightly unsafe, particularly at night.

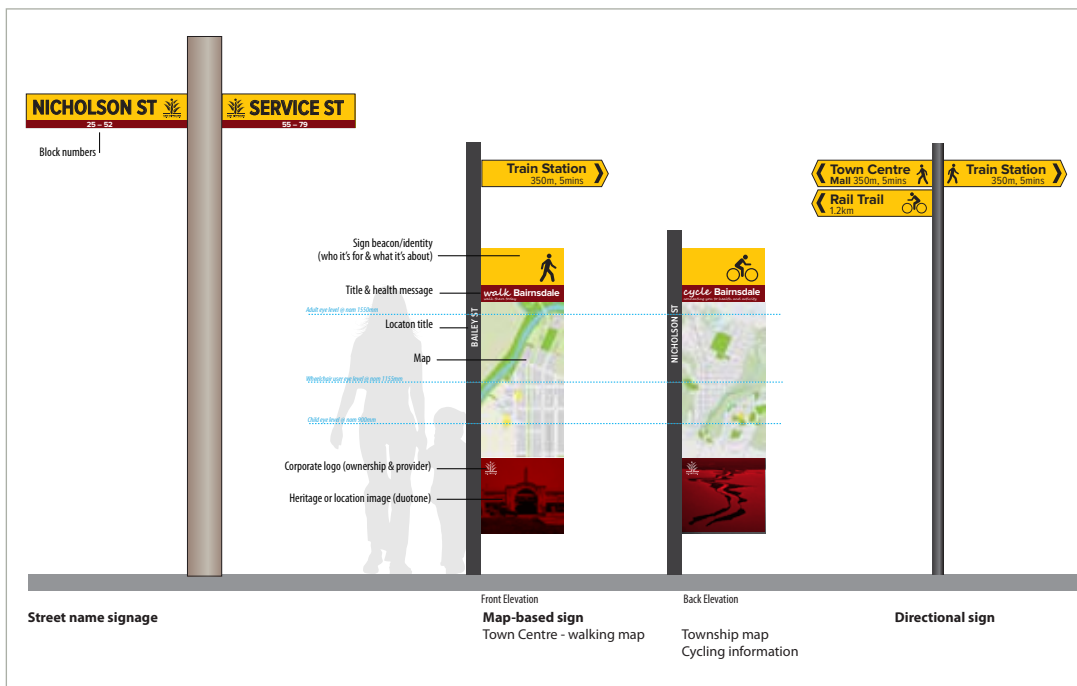
The first step in meeting the 'long desire line' is to run a pedestrian pathway down through the centre of the Main Street gardens and around the planting beds and to place street furniture in a way that encourages people to pause and linger, especially in the area between Bailey and Service Streets. No one will enjoy sitting on seats that are positioned in isolation from one another and exposed to traffic. They need to be grouped to define a space of intimacy.

The 'Pedestrian Connection Principles' Plan illustrates this objective (refer figure 2, Volume 2).

From the Main Street gardens core area the next step, and 'short desire line', is to open up the laneway system behind the Main Street shops and shorten the pedestrian connection distance to Nicholson Street.

There are already connections here via Campbells Arcade and through some of the coffee shops and banks. However these connections are limited to business hours and open onto a laneway system that is full of parked cars.

The lanes should be available for deliveries, but could be improved with temporary uses, coffee shops opening onto them and activities planned within them.



Integrated wayfinding signage

This is a programme requiring careful but innovative placemaking led by Council but initiated largely by the property owners and leaseholders.

An obvious and easy potential first connection is from Paperchase along the lane besides Woolworths to the new Mall in Nicholson Street. Others can also be opened and connected to this system. There is also a lane on the east side of Woolworths that could serve the same purpose.

From these connections the rejuvenated Mall has been designed to encourage people to see the space itself as intimate and safe. It has been purposefully left about 100 metres long because this is a distance that people can 'read' the presence of others and assess whether they feel safe.

At the corner of Nicholson and Bailey Streets the current Post Office is a structure that many would like to see replaced with a more striking and well-designed building that is composed to signal 'entry' to the Mitchell river.

Another important element to enhance walking through Bairnsdale is visible, well designed and consistent signage that identifies major public facilities and cultural attractions and institutions with clearly marked pedestrian and cycle routes.

The way to connect people with their town by walking is to encourage it 'one step at a time.' This may sound obvious but what do we mean by it? Walking through the lanes of Melbourne is enjoyable because we are 'engaged' repeatedly by shop windows every 5 or 10 metres. Each one is different and there are plenty of places to stop and rest, even if it means you have to buy a coffee to do so.

For the town core to prosper its traders need to sell goods and services but they also need to "sell an experience" that is unique in the town. They need to encourage people to stay, linger and enjoy the experience.

If that experience is simply going to be easy to access by car the economy of the present traders will suffer and decline.

Activity and diversity in the city core

Left: Food festivals

Right: Living above shops



ENCOURAGE ACTIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE CITY CORE

Towns that register in the public mind as having vibrancy and interest put themselves 'on the map' by hosting an annual event of particular interest. For example Wangaratta hosts a jazz festival, Port Fairy runs a folk and blues festival and Hobart has a biannual wooden boat festival. As an alternative to an annual event some towns brand themselves through a focused activity. Clunes has associated itself with books and in other cases towns have used 'food and wine' as a mean of distinguishing themselves. Dunkeld has achieved this with the Royal Mail Hotel and Mildura has with Stefano's.

Bairnsdale has a number of natural assets. It produces wonderful food products and is next door to a big fishing industry. It has an established horticultural industry producing vegetables. The rail line to Melbourne is back in business and has a rising patronage.

It is a place where a well-considered annual event or a seductive promotion of its local food and wine could reinforce the quest to have the 'core' seen as an attractive place in which to congregate.

SUPPORT INFILL AND SHOP TOP HOUSING

A greater mix of uses should be sought within developments with a genuine attempt to introduce upper level apartments and shop top housing throughout the CBD core including the laneways and arcades. It will likely require a change in the statutory process to support this strategic initiative to encourage more diverse housing choice including serviced apartments and more flexible car parking arrangements. Providing a mix of commercial and residential uses at the second or third storey would further contribute to activity and safety within the centre and ensure that it is used at varying hours of the day and night. This has been successfully achieved in regional centres such as Bendigo and Ballarat.



Activate shop frontages

Top left: Open

Bottom left: Open

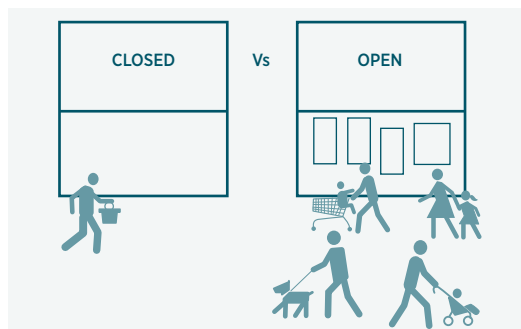
Top right: Open

Bottom right: Closed

ACTIVE FRONTAGES IN THE RETAIL HEART

The design of the ground floor frontages of buildings is crucial to the vitality of public life. Analysis shows that pedestrians move more slowly in front of active and interesting frontages. Inactive frontages discourage people from walking down a street. Ensuring active frontages remain along the Nicholson Street Mall, Main Street and the surrounding retail precinct is crucial to a successful, active streetscape. There are many areas in Bairnsdale where large plots with surface parking and no frontages or edges contribute to the dullness of the area. They also create open dark spaces that make people feel unsafe at night.

The more recent propensity for shop fronts to use their entire window space for poster advertising erodes the visual interaction between the shop and the public realm and needs to be resisted.



While it is not a blank wall, this recent advertising trend reduces passive surveillance and visual connectivity with the street. Critically, it reduces people's desire to linger.

Pausing and looking at goods in a shop window helps make the street feel active. Posters filling windows are largely about sending a visual message to people in cars. The message needs to go to people who are walking and pausing and they will only do that if the shop front is interesting, has a high degree of transparency and is engaging.

*Connect and
open vistas to
the river*

Left: Timber walkway near
Byron Bay

Right: River bank
observation platform



STRONG CONNECTIONS TO THE RIVER

The waterfront areas of many towns settled on rivers have undergone major transformations in the last 10-15 years. Melbourne is a prime example of a city that historically turned its back to the Yarra River. Today the Yarra is one of the jewels in the city's crown. This was only achieved through the strong commitment of both state and local government to realising a long term vision for the Yarra's revitalisation starting with The Age campaign of the 1970's to "Give the Yarra a Go!"

Bairnsdale has this opportunity. The Mitchell River is one of the city's principal assets and could be better utilised as a community space. It would benefit from stronger integration with the CBD. The steep slope is a major constraint but there are opportunities to overcome this barrier.

We walk longer distances when we are 'entertained' along the route. Shoppers will walk for long distances if their experience of the shop front changes regularly and is safe and easy to navigate.

Similarly, the journey along a pathway needs to be engaging. Symbols in the path, interpretive signage, resting places that seem safe, comfortable and welcoming all contribute to an enjoyable walking experience.

To connect the river to the CBD a small but effective step would be to construct a viewing platform overlooking the escarpment and to use this platform to interpret the role of the Mitchell River as an ecosystem in the evolution of Bairnsdale as a town.

It is north facing and could be an enjoyable space to sit, eat and take in the valley of the Mitchell River.

Connecting a pedestrian pathway down to the river that winds down the escarpment could beneficially be included with a public art 'experience.'

The important thing is to create a series of short links that move from the Mall to the top of the escarpment to the river bank.

Pedestrian access down the river from Riverine Street is a top priority. A stronger visual link is required from the CBD so that there is a stronger connection to the river both in a physical sense and metaphorically. A detailed plan for how land should be developed along Riverine Street should also be an integral component to revitalising the city's connection to the river.



5 THE MASTERPLAN

SUMMARY OF VISION

The core vision of the Masterplan for Bairnsdale CBD is to 'create a contemporary, vibrant urban centre with public spaces that support commercial, cultural and social activity and a more sustainable city.'

East Gippsland Shire Brief, *Bairnsdale Masterplan 2011*

No smoking
No skate boards
No alcohol
No bicycles on
sidewalks





Improving visibility into the Mall will help make people feel safe

In re-imagining the Bairnsdale CBD the vision is to provide;

- A walkable, well connected city
- A lively and safe city
- An active street life and well-designed public realm
- Attractive and unified streetscape character
- A transformed Main Street gardens
- A well designed, functional and accessible pedestrian Mall
- Strong connections between the city and the river
- Activated laneways and arcades

This will create a walkable, vibrant, beautiful city. The framework for this plan can be distilled to the following;

- Establish a pedestrian friendly city core
- Improve connections between key destinations
- Reinforce and enhance cycle networks
- Improve the quality of streets and other public places
- Create visible and well-connected linkages to river
- Establish a unified 'Bairnsdale' public realm materials and furniture palette
- Establish a coherent vegetation/planting strategy and maintenance programme
- Appoint a 'place maker' or 'place manager' to assist with laneway activation and activities program

- Instigate a public art programme for public spaces

UPGRADING NICHOLSON STREET MALL

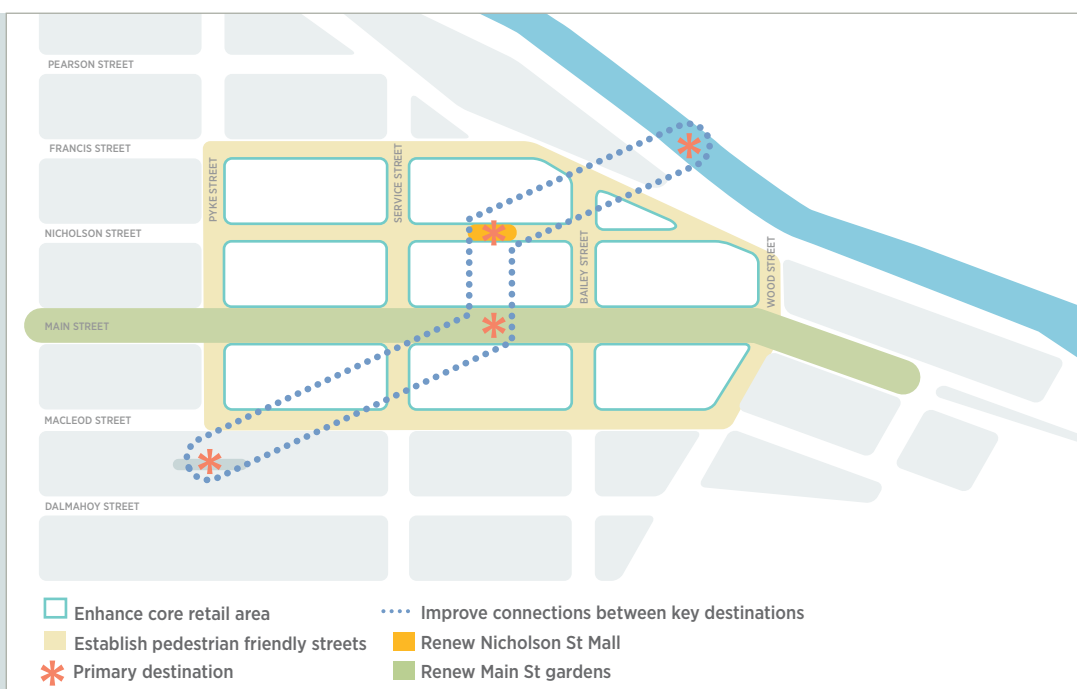
Objective: To define the role and function of the Nicholson Street Mall precinct and re-design the precinct as the central focus of activity in the Bairnsdale CBD

The Nicholson Street Mall is the only pedestrianized mall in Bairnsdale. It is contained between Bailey Street to the east and the edge of Woolworths supermarket and a car park to the west.

The consultant team have produced a concept plan for the revitalisation of the Mall. One of the central aims is to extend the 'streetscape' beyond the mall so that walking along Nicholson Street feels like a continuous streetscape experience connecting the art gallery in the east to the library in the west. Another important element is reinforcing the street and laneway connections north and south, linking the Mall to Main Street and the central gardens.

There are a number of design elements that will help reinforce these connections. They include consistent tree planting; re-grading of surfaces and continuous paving; effective signage and clear entry and exit markers.

Framework plan for Bairnsdale CBD



Design aims:

- Create a well-designed contemporary palette of materials, furniture and finishes
- Facilitate and encourage circulation through and around the space
- Provide social gathering spaces including areas where children can play and people can sit comfortably
- Provide shelter (from wind, sun and rain)
- Improve access to parking (bicycles and vehicles)
- Provide centrally located and clean toilets
- Provide central kiosk
- Simplify and upgrade surfaces and furniture treatments
- New lighting
- Create safe and legible crossing points at intersections (Service Street and Bailey Streets)
- Create connection between library and art gallery
- Link the mall with the broader context of Nicholson Street

The Nicholson Street Mall concept plan proposes to:

- Retain the existing mature trees and plant new trees
- Extend the mall to the east and west by approximately 10m either side
- Remove existing rock gardens, planter boxes, timber decking and seating

- Provide new seating, garden beds or lawn areas and bicycle parking, rubbish bins and lighting
- A raised timber terrace (only 1-2 steps high) at the east end for use as a performance space and as an informal playground
- A new kiosk/cafe structure at the eastern end of the mall
- Renovate the existing Rotary kiosk with canopies for weather protection and modifications to create better functioning of the building and modernise its appearance
- New street trees, paving and street furniture along Nicholson Street between Service and Bailey Streets that provides a continuous link between the Library and Art Gallery
- A toilet facility in either the Rotary Kiosk or the new kiosk structure
- Remove and replace canopy/shade structure in front of Woolworths

Elements and materials:

- Use of robust, highly durable materials such as bluestone (on a concrete slab), reinforced concrete, and stainless steel which will minimise maintenance requirements and maximise the lifespan of the Mall;
- Use of standard sized elements (timber lengths, bluestone sizes etc.) to minimise the construction wastage of the project and allow for easy replacement of elements;



**CBD priorities
for improvement
identified by local
businesses:**

Managing anti-social behaviour	54.4%
Improving amenity/beautification of the CBD	43.2%
Events	36.4%

- Use of locally sourced materials such as timber, local aggregates, gravels etc.;
- Use of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) to assist the vision impaired
- Use of heel-safe grates, slip resistant compliant paving and smooth edges to raised surfaces
- Re-use of existing drainage systems and elements;
- Use of locally appropriate plants such as Grevillea 'Bairnsdale'
- Use of site specific, drought tolerant, low maintenance planting
- Use of permeable paving to irrigate existing trees
- Addition of large evergreen trees and planting to enhance the 'greenery' throughout the seasons and improve the microclimate and habitability of the space
- Large comfortable backed seats

TRANSFORMING MAIN STREET GARDENS

Objective: identify and design improvements to the Main Street gardens as a recreation and community space that is a distinguishing characteristic of Bairnsdale CBD

Main Street and its gardens play a pivotal role in the history of Bairnsdale. It is a cultural place not just a thoroughfare for vehicles and occupies a unique place in the lives, affections and memories of all Bairnsdale residents.

Since the advent of the motor car Main Street has been disconnected from the gardens. They have become an underutilised space that many people drive past rather than visit as a destination and a place to linger, sit and relax. The Main Street gardens present a significant opportunity to improve the CBD. This public open space is a major asset to Bairnsdale and one of its defining landmarks. It plays an important role in welcoming visitors to the town and provides a pleasant amenity backdrop to the town environment. The gardens are extremely well maintained and provide a positive image for the town.

Returning the gardens to their former glory, lifting their prominence and exploring new ways to draw people into the heart of the gardens is part of this Masterplan.



Design aims

- A place of refuge and delight in the city celebrated for its distinctiveness and local character
- Well-connected and accessible to a network of public spaces
- A sustainable place that improves the local microclimate, enhances biodiversity and provides shade and shelter
- A grand boulevard with strong avenue trees celebrated as the 'gateway' to Bairnsdale and the Lakes
- An adaptable and robust green space that can respond to changing social, economic and environmental conditions
- A space that people of all different ages and backgrounds can use and enjoy

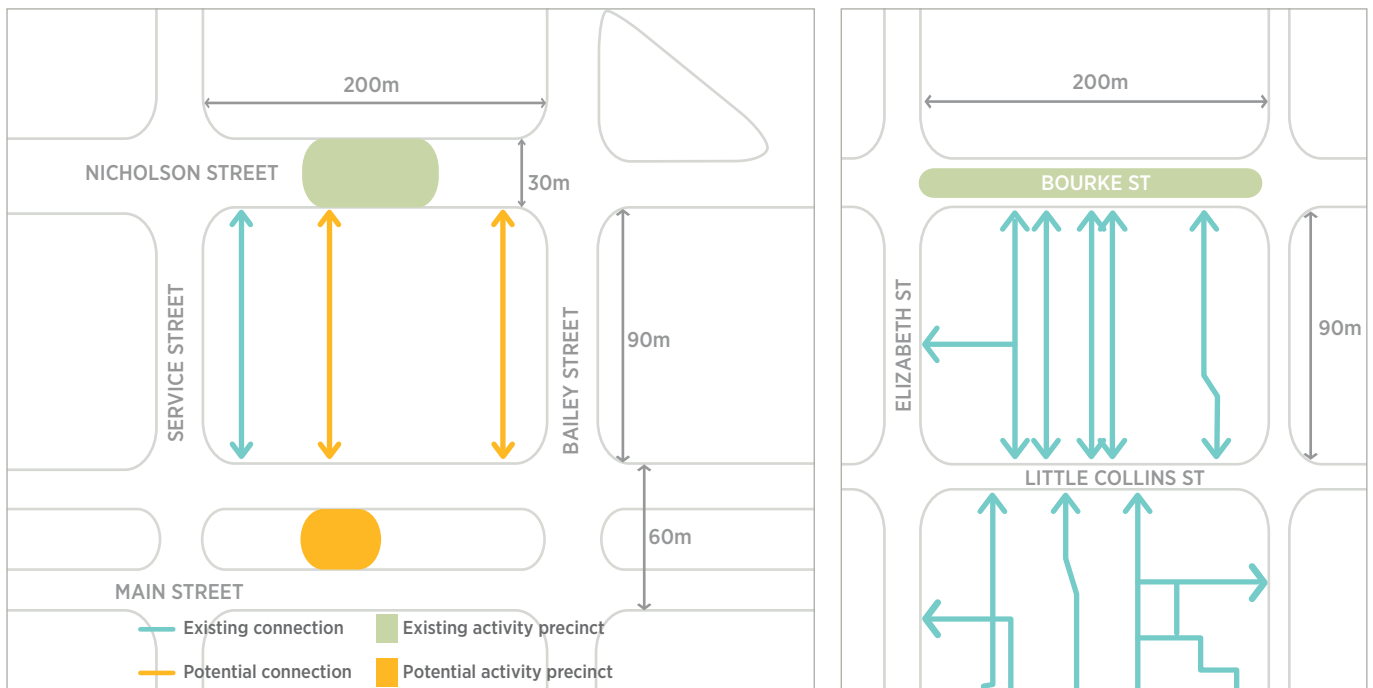
Recommendations:

- Reinforce central pathway, encouraging east-west pedestrian movement
- Provide pockets of interest and intimate spaces with a sense of privacy and enclosure for conversation and relaxation
- Celebrate our heroes and acknowledge our history
- Employ new planting initiatives that reflect old and new heritage
- Relocate mass planting beds to define pedestrian entry/exit points
- Plant colourful 'edible' plants to reflect market garden heritage and seasonal changes

- Allow for a range of activities and community users – bocce court, chess, café, music performances, markets, functions, fairs, children's play
- Establish consistent signage strategy
- Remove the powerlines between Bailey and Service Streets

The Main Street gardens concept plan proposes to:

- Reinforce vistas and pedestrian movement east and west
- Provide additional avenue tree planting to reinforce a sense of enclosure, dappled light and shade
- Establish meandering pathways through what are currently very linear gardens and provide opportunities for small openings and intimate spaces where people can stop, look or sit.
- Establish new planting initiatives with water sensitive design features
- Create opportunities for information boards about the plant species and also display points for historic information
- Provide comfortable new seating areas that encourage conversation and relaxation
- Improve pedestrian crossings to reinforce central axis and usability of gardens
- Provide opportunities for events/function spaces such as a new kiosk, cafe/public toilet, bocce court and informal play spaces for children



- A central gravel pathway to define the boulevard, provide connections between key landmarks and to encourage people to walk through the gardens
- Retain existing trees and plant new trees to create a beautiful treed boulevard
- Retain the lawn areas and create new garden beds including annuals planting at street intersections to provide bursts of colour
- A new community gathering space in front of Rotunda
- Remodel the toilet block to include a kiosk/cafe facility with toilet facilities and a play space area addressing level change and accessibility issues
- Create new seating areas along the central pathway
- Retain existing war memorial monuments and reinstate plaques on seating and in garden beds

ACTIVATING LANEWAYS AND ARCADES

Objective: To identify priority design improvements to other key spaces in the CBD

Laneways are often forgotten spaces. In these small gaps between buildings, the gritty, unglamorous, and sometimes socially undesirable activities of the city take place. Many laneways are located in prime locations close to busy streets and shopping precincts. Other cities such as Melbourne, Bendigo

and Geelong have recognised the potential that laneways offer with their intimate scale, successfully transforming them from back alleys to unique destinations thriving with activity.

Regardless of their historic and current function or location, laneways share one common asset: they offer human scale experiences and have the potential to be the little jewels of the city, full of charm and character.

More significantly for Bairnsdale the north-south orientation of the laneways are intrinsic to the successful integration and connection of the city's primary public spaces and retail precincts. While the Mall and the gardens need to be revitalised, the key to their success is whether people can easily access them by foot and by sight. Currently there is no direct visual or physical pathway encouraging people down to the gardens from the Mall, despite the fact they are only 90m apart.

A walk from Collins Bookstore along Main St, Bailey and then Nicholson St to Woolworths is about 300m. A walk from Collins Bookstore though the rear lane of Woolworths is just over 100m.

Opening up these north-south connections between Nicholson Street Mall and Main Street will create a more permeable and fine grain pedestrian network that provides good shortcuts for pedestrians to move between city blocks.

City grid comparisons

Right: Bairnsdale CBD

Left: Melbourne CBD

*Coffee shops
help activate
lonely public
spaces*

Paperchase courtyard
Bairnsdale



The laneways can offer cheaper rent spaces for new enterprises and 'start-up' businesses that can assist in diversifying the CBD economy. Some businesses have started to create activity in these thoroughfares, with art work and café courtyards such as Collins Bookshop and Bairnsdale House and Gift shop.

The principal activity within the laneways is mainly as rear delivery conduits for shops and a largely passive use as car parking areas.

Many of the laneways suffer from poor amenity. There is a lack of consistent surface treatments with some areas asphalted and others partly gravel. There are areas of uneven paving as well as drainage hotspots. Blank walls, poor lighting and untidy 'back of house' areas contribute to the lower level of amenity experienced along these lanes. At night these spaces are dark and intimidating.

Creating vibrancy, and therefore a perception of safety in laneways relies, in large part on the types of businesses in the laneways and the viability of those businesses. Consideration needs to be given to how to encourage and support businesses to set up and stay. They need solid patronage if they are to survive. Appointing a 'place maker' to help establish opportunities that will catalyse social and economic activity in the laneways would be a positive first step.

Collaboration with Advance TAFE, the Bairnsdale art gallery, the library and local businesses could help to establish creative projects in alternative CBD venues such as the laneways, the Mall and the gardens. Installing permanent and temporary seating for outdoor cinema or other musical performances, cafes spilling into the street, pergola structures to encourage 'green' spaces, even a hopscotch game on the pavement or table tennis are simple cost effective measures used by business entrepreneurs to transform underutilised spaces in many urban centres.

Challenges:

- Underutilised assets
- Dominated by parked cars and delivery vehicles
- Poor signage/wayfinding
- Poor lighting
- Blank walls
- Intimidating at night
- Poor surveillance and undesirable activity

Design aims:

The vision for revitalising and reinforcing the value of Bairnsdale's laneways will be realised by:

- Opening up and reinforcing the north-south connections so that there is a direct visual and physical link between the Mall and the gardens
- Continuing to upgrade the physical form of laneways



Laneways in need of care



Top left: Lane alongside Woolworths east side

Bottom left: Lane from Collins Bookstore to Woolworths

Top right: Room for loading and people

Bottom right: Opportunity for housing on top

- Designing initiatives to attract and retain people and businesses in the laneway areas (e.g. small bars, Wifi hotspots, alfresco areas)
- Identifying and promoting complimentary business sponsorships and grant programmes (e.g. Heritage, Community and Arts grants)
- Creating strong and active partnerships with local businesses, property owners and community organisations
- Supporting events including social and artistic activities (e.g. festivals, art installations)
- Attracting and supporting creative industries
- Valuing and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation (e.g. small business grants)
- Ensuring new adjoining buildings incorporate active edges and upper floors that overlook the laneways
- Restoring existing built form edges (e.g. eliminating blank walls)
- Establishing guidelines to protect the fine grain of the city (e.g. explore amendments to the Planning Scheme); and
- Promoting this document to raise awareness and build enthusiasm.

Recommendations:

- Commence physical upgrade of existing laneways to encourage investment and improve safety
- Work with local businesses and community organisations such as the TAFE and art gallery to find simple, even temporary solutions to improve the look and feel of the laneways such as art installations, planter boxes, pergola structures
- Appoint a 'place maker' to investigate economic and cultural opportunities that will help activate the laneways over a significant time period. The programme should involve funding for some catalyst projects.
- Council officer's to undertake a short study tour to meet with counterparts in local councils where laneway activation has been successful, e.g. Melbourne, Bendigo and Geelong.

A town that is
'typical' and
'unique'



Top left: Recreation by the river

Bottom left: Trees welcoming arrival in Bairnsdale



Right: A walk to the river



CONNECTING THE CITY WITH THE RIVER

Objective: to enhance linkages between the CBD and the Mitchell River environs.

The Mitchell river flats and extensive parkland area is currently an underutilised and ignored part of the Bairnsdale CBD. The topographical condition of steep slopes reinforces the visual and physical barriers.

Along the riverbanks there is a collection of seating in standard municipal design, however seats along the riverbank facing the river is limited. A different design aesthetic could be employed for seating along the river which has a more 'organic' feel to fit with the natural environment.

There is a significant opportunity to bring more life and activity to the river. A safer pedestrian pathway down to the river from Riverine Street is required. Clear and coherent vehicle and pedestrian signage can assist with wayfinding and also safety.

The Old Mill is tired and would benefit from a refurbishment to enhance its appearance and help encourage more activity and use. This could involve remodelling of the existing structure including reducing and replacing the existing roofing material and reducing the extent of brick paving.

There is an opportunity to create a new outdoor performance space, such as an amphitheatre, which makes the most of views out over the river.

A viewing platform from the Riverine Street level would provide a unique tourist destination and also assist with visually linking the river to the CBD.

Renewed or new public furniture such as play equipment, seating (particularly along the riverbank facing the river) and bbq facilities would encourage greater use of the river environs.

River and Art gallery precinct

The triangular parcel of land bounded by Riverine Bailey and Nicholson Streets that accommodates the post office, Courthouse and Art Gallery should be included as part of any future concept or masterplans.

The Bairnsdale Growth Strategy prepared a draft 'river environs' masterplan for this precinct which sought to improve the physical and visual connections between the river and the CBD.

Private land ownership

Further to the north-west along Riverine Street are a collection of land parcels of which the majority are in private ownership. Some of this land is developed whilst the land closer to the Old Mill area remains vacant. The land presents a significant slope constraint to any future development and also presents a risk to losing prime views to the river from the CBD (i.e. from Bailey, Riverine and Nicholson Streets predominantly). Ideally this land would remain in public ownership for community use in the long term. This would also have the benefit of preserving the visual connection between the CBD and river environment.



*Connections
promoting
walking and
childs play*



Right: Playground in the
central median

Top left: I can walk for
miles ...

Bottom left: and miles and
miles ...

Recommendations:

- Council to prepare a concept for the Mitchell River, Riverine Street and triangular portion of land
- Council to explore zoning changes or policy for land along Riverine Street river frontage to enable long term access and vistas to the Mitchell River
- Install visible structures/nodal points at key interchanges to entice people to the river frontage
- Install clear and bold signage to improve legibility (including cycle network)
- Mediate the grade change by inserting pedestrian friendly sculptural paths and steps for more direct connections to the river
- Reclaim community space by upgrading Old Mill structure, provide new seating/BBQ facilities
- Instigate public art installations that reference the natural and cultural history of the river
- Expand art gallery forecourt northwards towards the river
- Install playground facilities to entice children and families
- Establish co-ordinated programme of activities
- Create consistent feature lighting/illumination – improve safety

GREENING BAIRNSDALE'S STREETS

Objective: to create a sustainable city centre with high quality and consistent street tree patterns

The masterplan seeks to establish a green urban structure within the city core. This is to be achieved through two primary recommendations: to increase the canopy cover within the city core and to establish an environmentally responsible approach to management of the CBD public realm environment.

Trees contribute significantly to the overall visual appearance and enjoyment of streets. They help to beautify the streetscape, provide shade and protection from wind and rain, assist in purifying air quality and stormwater management and have an overall cooling effect to the street. Increasing the canopy cover within the city core will not only assist in enticing people to walk and linger in the streets but also delivers environmental benefits.

There is a strong tradition of planting in Bairnsdale including formal trees, planting beds, informal native trees and coastal shrubbery. However the city core lacks a unified landscape theme or street tree character. The city has a diversity of tree species with a large proportion of deciduous trees in differing states of health. This is both an asset and challenge. The diversity of species creates a more resilient stock of street trees in terms of overcoming disease problems or adverse weather conditions.

Greening Bairnsdale's streets

Main Street Gardens 2012



Main qualities for creating safe and successful streets (Jane Jacobs)

1. A clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space
2. Eyes on the street – buildings must be oriented to the street with multiple openings and limited blank facades
3. Footpaths should be in fairly continuous use which adds to the number of effective eyes on the street

The challenge is in establishing a consistent design aesthetic for the public realm where trees are an important contributor to the overall visual quality of streets.

Whilst some streets have a series of tree plantings with established broad canopies, there are some streets in the CBD that are completely devoid of planting. This can create a harsh streetscape space which has limited opportunities for shade, wind protection and a reduced visual quality. Another challenge is overhead power lines that limit tree species and height in some areas, particularly the north side of Main Street.

The proposed street tree plan for Bairnsdale CBD seeks to rectify the current situation and establish a strategy for the ongoing maintenance of existing street trees and establishment of new canopy trees in priority streets.

The plan provides an equal mix of evergreen and deciduous trees that reflects and seeks to enhance the existing diversity of tree species within the CBD.

A sustainable design approach to streetscape improvements

An environmentally responsive approach to maintaining and creating public spaces is a crucial consideration for public spaces in the 21st century. Recent events including drought, flooding and water restrictions highlight the need to ensure Bairnsdale's public space design is resilient to these natural occurrences and is developed and used in a

sustainable manner which ensures the longevity of public spaces.

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) offers a sustainable alternative to conventional approaches to stormwater management and can be implemented across a range of scales from a whole of neighbourhood approach to a single local street or public space area. WSUD techniques essentially aim to achieve two core outcomes: lowering peak stormwater flows through detention/retention systems and protecting the quality of water draining from urban land through infiltration systems.

Additional benefits of WSUD can include passive street tree watering that reduces reliance on potable water supplies and improved recreational and visual amenity for urban areas by increased landscaped areas.

Further investigation and implementation of WSUD applications across the Bairnsdale CBD is recommended with particular focus on:

- Drainage hot spots (for example laneway to the rear of Collins Bookshop & Lanteri's grocery, the north side of Nicholson Street)
- Opportunistic design - such as street tree watering benefits from bio retention systems
- Whole of centre approach - an integrated and sustainable drainage strategy for the whole CBD



A seat for the birds

Nicholson Street Mall

Design aims:

- A city renowned for its lush tree lined streets and resilient urban structure
- A uniform street tree character that provides a mix of light and shade
- Mix of suitable native and deciduous trees
- Feature trees that act as markers to key destinations in the city

- Explore removal of overhead powerlines in Main Street (priority area between Service and Bailey Streets) in collaboration with SP Ausnet
- Develop a GIS database of street trees including identification of species type, age estimate level of significance (standard/significant/heritage), annual audit comments on health

Recommendations:

- Establish a “Street Tree Programme” to increase and maintain canopy cover within the city core:
 - Prioritise long term streetscape planting
 - Create an infill and replacement programme
 - Apply design guidelines to development applications
 - Management and maintenance guidelines
- Establish an “Adopt a street tree” programme where local business/land owners can contribute to the establishment of new street trees through a small financial contribution and commitment to minor maintenance role (e.g. watering during dry periods, low level pruning)
- Establish a “Green infrastructure programme”:
 - Use of environmentally sustainable materials in public realm capital works (porous paving, recycled materials, locally sourced materials)
 - Apply WSUD techniques for stormwater management (particularly drainage ‘hot spots’) and tree watering opportunities (e.g. bio-retention systems, porous paving, swales)

MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Realising the vision for Bairnsdale’s public realm requires strong leadership and a long term commitment across all facets of Council. An annual management and maintenance program for the streets, green spaces and other public areas within the city core is crucial to maintaining the quality of these spaces and their longevity.

Materials chosen for key public realm upgrades, namely the Mall and the gardens should be durable and resistant to vandalism with anti-graffiti finishes where possible.

Components have been chosen that can easily be changed and refurbished.

Regular cleaning and maintenance will be critical to maintaining the quality of the Bairnsdale CBD and maintenance manuals should be prepared to outline the proper maintenance procedures for each design element, particularly the street furniture.

*Highlight entry
into Bairnsdale
CBD*



FINANCING THE MASTERPLAN

There are effectively three sources of funding for projects identified in the Masterplan:

- Council revenue
- Grant schemes from State and Federal agencies
- Private capital

The three catalyst projects of the Mall, Main Street Gardens and the library are funded through a combination of Council revenue and government grants. Council officers will continue to pursue those opportunities for other projects like extensions to the Main Street gardens, art installations on the water tower and connections to the river.

Opportunities for collaboration between private and public capital can be beneficially pursued for projects such as 'Greening' Bairnsdale streets, activating the laneways and reorganising car parking.

Managing towns and cities is not as simple as spending on one's own assets. Activating the lanes is a crucial component of revitalising Bairnsdale. This will need funding to assist 'start-up' premises, changes to planning policy and infrastructure such as planting and shade structures. It will also need a 'Place manager' with sufficient savvy to be able to negotiate with traders and land owners and those showing entrepreneurial spirit. That funding can be a combination of public and private capital.

Council will need to identify programmes around a funding model of this kind.

A similar approach can be taken in planting street trees. A number of traders have offered to pay part of the cost of tree planting and organise watering in dry periods.

Design aesthetic

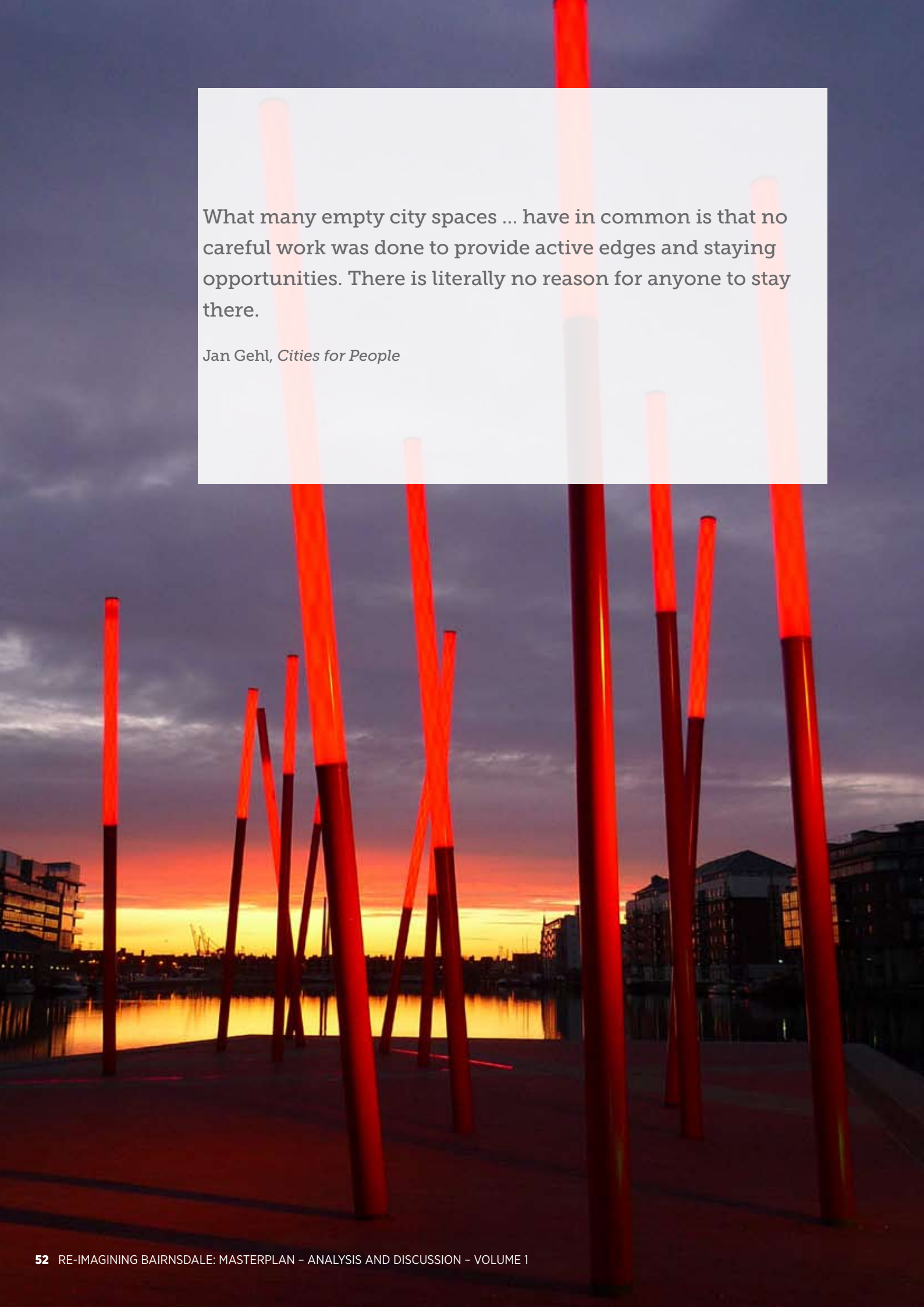
The Bairnsdale CBD requires a consistent design aesthetic to be employed for any public realm works and for ongoing maintenance. Street furniture, lighting, and signage play an important role in providing public amenities but they also contribute to a visual consistency of the environment. The repetitive use of a coordinated and flexible suite of high quality contemporary furniture, lighting and signage items is a significant step towards achieving a distinctive and vital public realm.

The Public Realm Guidelines establish a 'Bairnsdale suite' of materials and design elements for the city's public realm spaces that include seating, lighting and signage design elements.

Whilst there is a cohesive palette of materials and elements to be utilised in the CBD there is the opportunity for some special places to employ non-standard public realm elements, such as the creation of more distinctive organic style seating along the riverbank or feature lighting in the Main Street gardens.

6 PUBLIC REALM





What many empty city spaces ... have in common is that no careful work was done to provide active edges and staying opportunities. There is literally no reason for anyone to stay there.

Jan Gehl, *Cities for People*



A unified and well-designed CBD public realm

Barcelona streetscape

PUBLIC REALM

Streetscape elements within the public realm such as furniture, planting and pavement, contribute to the character and visual and physical amenity of the township. Therefore it is important to develop unified, cohesive and consistent character themes that can be used to guide the design and development of the public realm.

Design principles

The following design principles have been formulated to guide the design of the streetscape elements and to provide a consistent and unified streetscape treatment and character:

1. To create a visually cohesive and well-designed public realm.
2. To ensure the design of the public realm areas provides a high quality and durable public realm environment.
3. To encourage pedestrian use, circulation and activities within public areas.
4. To develop consistent and unified character themes of streetscape materials and furniture elements.
5. To provide opportunities for passive and active surveillance of pedestrians and activity areas.
6. To ensure careful and considered placement of elements within the public realm to provide unimpeded pedestrian circulation and avoid clutter.
7. To take into account seasonal conditions and day/night use.
8. To encourage public use and social interaction within the public realm.
9. To provide protection from the weather.
10. To incorporate conforming design, in accordance with Australian Standards and State and Federal Government legislation, including:
 - Providing all abilities access for users regardless of age or ability;
 - Crime Prevention Through Environment Design Principles (CPTED) to ensure public spaces are safe;
 - To ensure design and construction adheres to Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) and Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) Principles.

Designing for the pedestrian

The core objective of the Bairnsdale public realm masterplan is to create a pedestrian friendly city CBD. A high quality, attractive and functional pedestrian friendly city provides public spaces that are both comfortable and enjoyable to spend time in.

Hierarchy of street users

1st the pedestrian

2nd the cyclist

3rd the vehicle user

Pathways

Good paths entice you onwards with a sense of wonder and discovery.

Each bend opening to new vistas and a sense of something beyond

(J Sabey, Artist)



A pedestrian friendly city has pleasant and user friendly pathways that provide connections for people between destinations. They should be enjoyable public spaces.

Pathways should provide linkages between key destinations or connect to key destinations. Pedestrian paths should be continuous and form part of a circulating, connected path network. They should be clear of obstruction and regularly maintained to ensure they are safe to use and visually pleasing.

Places to linger, stay, play and engage

A high quality pedestrian environment is not only about movement through public space but also about lingering, socialising, interaction and play.

The public realm should provide spaces for organised and informal, temporary and seasonal events or activities. This creates opportunities for social engagement and community interaction.

The public realm should also provide opportunities for social interaction, gathering or sitting by providing spaces that are easily accessed from the main pedestrian pathways, are along the perimeter of the pedestrian activity areas or are close to main activity areas.

Other elements that contribute to providing a high quality public realm that attracts and encourages pedestrian use and activity are:

- Active building frontages – movement to and from and around buildings provides activity and interest within the public realm.
- Attractive and architecturally interesting building treatments, providing visual amenity and pleasant or interesting streetscape views.
- Highlight opportunities for pleasant and interesting views within the public realm or to adjoining or distant areas.



"Small in scale means exciting, intense and warm cities"

(Gehl, 2010: 53)

Left: Main Street, Virginia

Right: Paper Chase café courtyard, Bairnsdale

ACTIVE BUILDING FRONTAGE AND STREETSCAPE STRUCTURE

Elements along the streetscape contribute to its activation, vitality and character. Elements to consider when designing the streetscape are as follows:

Weather protection

Weather protection elements are important to maintaining a comfortable and pleasant public realm. Weather protection elements can also contribute to the overall streetscape or public realm character and can signify specific activity areas.

Awnings, verandahs and canopy elements attached to building facades should:

- Provide weather protection and make a positive contribution to the visual quality of the building and public realm environment
- Be an integrated component of the building design
- Add to the overall visual quality of the building's appearance
- Where retro fitted to existing buildings or heritage buildings, show consideration to the building fabric, style and heritage
- Be designed in accordance with current Building regulations and relevant Australian Standards

Active building frontages and streetscapes

Active building frontages and streetscapes provide activity and interest along the streetscape. This encourages pedestrian use and circulation along the streetscape activating the public realm and allows for passive surveillance.

- Built form should provide ground floor uses that create pedestrian movement and activity along the building frontages; this provides visual interest and encourages activity along the streetscape
- Ground floor windows and door openings are to be maintained as transparent, to allow views in and out and passive surveillance
- Screening that blocks views in and out of shop front windows during opening hours, to be discouraged
- Elements associated with retail businesses that are located in front of a building, such as signs, chairs and tables should not unreasonably impede the flow of pedestrian traffic
- Screens should maintain clear sightlines and should not exceed 900mm including planter boxes. (Signage is considered under the Planning Scheme.)
- Structures used by businesses and placed within the streetscape, should not fully enclose public space and must be in accordance with Councils local laws

*Activity, shade
and a place to
rest*

Left: Pop up kiosk

Right: Shade structure,
Sydney



- Permanent structures that may be considered are retractable awnings, glass screens, fixed heaters and approved planter boxes
- Streetscape elements that make a positive contribution to street life and the visual quality of the public realm are encouraged

Drop down blinds

Drop-down blinds attached to canopies to shade or protect fresh produce displays are supported in accordance with Councils local laws (particularly west facing shopfronts).

Outdoor Umbrellas

Where existing shelter such as verandahs, canopies or trees do not provide sufficient sun protection, large outdoor umbrellas are encouraged. In accordance with Councils local laws. They:

- Should maintain clear sight lines for pedestrians and vehicular traffic
- Be placed away from main pedestrian movements
- Should be secured to avoid lifting/movement in strong winds

- Employ form, colours and materials sympathetic to heritage character (where applicable), the overall visual quality of the CBD and the typical streetscape character themes that apply within the area

Multi-purpose kiosks

The design of multi-purpose kiosks in public spaces should allow for flexible use such as a newspaper kiosk, fruit and flower kiosk, a coffee shop or community/market facility. The kiosk should be:

- Compact in scale and form
- Easy to open and close
- Robust and of anti-graffiti materials
- Compatible with other built forms in the public realm
- Designed by an architect with industrial/engineering design input on fittings

Utility and rear building areas

Side and rear building facades and utility areas visible from the public realm, should be well maintained and clear of clutter and waste items, particularly frontages to public laneways.



Paving quality and patterns can distinguish the importance of place in a city

Creative paving treatment, Cocobana, Rio de Janeiro

PEDESTRIAN PAVEMENT

There are general principles that can be used to determine the pedestrian pavement treatment and to establish pedestrian pavement areas. These are:

- Maintain a clear path of travel for pedestrian pathways to create a safe walking pathway network
- Determine a consistent and unifying pavement treatment theme/s for public realm areas
- Pavement materials should be durable, non-slip, and easy to maintain to ensure safe and pleasant passage of travel
- Existing heritage elements, such as brick channels and metal grates, should be retained where possible and feasible and in accordance with Council requirements
- Utilise permeable/porous paving material where feasible and in specific locations for water sensitive urban design opportunities.
- Ensure that these meet Council and Water Authority guidelines and requirements
- Ensure pedestrian pathways provide access for all abilities and allow for 2 way pedestrian traffic in accordance with regulations.
- Investigate opportunities to provide continuous path systems, highlighting pedestrian priority areas or crossing points, by continuing/extending paving treatments:
 - Across lanes, driveways, access ways
 - Across streets where no signals exist

Ensure that these continuous treatments provide safe crossing points for pedestrians.

An important element within the public realm is the pedestrian path system as it generally defines the extent of the public realm areas and activity zones and highlights the priority of the pedestrian within the public realm.

The path system and pavement material, colour and texture are also important visual and physical elements within the public realm environment as they visually define the path system and aid in directing pedestrian traffic through the public realm environment.

Consistency in pavement treatments is important to signify the location of pedestrian areas, specific precincts or activity areas. Therefore, it is important to establish a consistent and unifying pavement theme for the public realm areas.

Specific precincts or activity areas can also be highlighted and defined with alternate pavement treatments that differ from the main pedestrian path system.

Special furniture for special places

Left: High Line, New York

Right: Paley Park, New York



Pavement maintenance and management programme

The Bairnsdale public realm masterplan audited the existing condition of paving throughout the CBD. The audit identified 'poor condition' pavement areas and these should be prioritised for repair and/or reconstruction in the preferred paving material.

Council's annual maintenance programme would benefit from an auditing process to assess footpath condition and to prioritise repair or replacement works. The audit programme may also be used to determine any issues with the pavement treatment and materials or highlight continual problems such as drainage issues and pavement surface issues.

It is suggested that an opportunistic approach to paving repairs is employed so that paving repair work is incorporated as part of utility provider or private development construction works.

STREETSCAPE FURNITURE ELEMENTS

Streetscape elements such as seating, rubbish bins and bollards contribute to the character and amenity of an area. They can also be used to define public realm areas, specific precincts and activity zones. As well, the style and form of streetscape elements can be important visual and physical indicators within the public realm environment that signify specific precincts, activity areas or pedestrian path systems.

Streetscape character themes can also be used to highlight or complement typical existing built form, streetscape or landscape character such as heritage elements, specific colour themes, particular material use, style and form, etc. Alternatively, character themes can be used to establish a consistent streetscape character to areas where there is an inconsistent, undistinguishable or limited existing character.

Consistency in the style and form of the streetscape elements is important to characterise precincts or areas.



Lighting in public spaces makes people feel safe

General guidelines for selecting streetscape elements

There are general principles that can be used to determine the most appropriate or suitable streetscape elements:

- Careful placement of the streetscape elements is required to avoid clutter or unnecessary use of elements
- Adopt a contemporary robust style
- Use high quality products to ensure a high quality appearance
- Allow for flexibility and bespoke design in specific precincts or main activity zones such as the Mall, the river environs and the gardens
- Functionality and ease of maintenance and replacement of parts is critical
- Consider the needs of user abilities and ages
- Design should reflect the civic and cultural character of Bairnsdale

LIGHTING

Lighting has the potential to contribute significantly to the quality of Bairnsdale's public realm and the experience of night time users. It can help improve public safety and highlight particular elements and buildings in the city with dramatic effect.

Feature lighting should focus on illuminating features/structures such as the water tower, historic buildings, sculptures and feature trees in Main Street gardens using carefully controlled lighting.

*Peaceful and
serene*

Tree lined street, Spain



STREET TREE PLANTING

Planting - soft landscape elements such as gardens, lawns and street trees are an important contributor to creating an attractive public realm. Soft landscape also delivers important environmental benefits; such as moderating the microclimate, providing habitat, improving air quality and reducing stormwater runoff.

- Soft landscape works may include in-ground planting (tree wells and planting strips), fixed or moveable planter boxes/pots, hanging planters
- Landscape elements can provide buffer separation between pedestrian paths and vehicular zones, to assist defining edges and boundaries, to enhance appearance of structures and spaces as well as screening undesirable views
- Planted medians create visual interest and can provide safe pedestrian refuges within vehicle zones
- Reducing water consumption should be an important consideration in the design process including opportunities for introducing WSUD techniques

Street trees make a vital contribution to the creation of pleasant public realm environments and help to reinforce the visual structure of the CBD. The Bairnsdale public realm masterplan seeks to create a sustainable city centre with high quality and consistent street tree patterns. An annual street tree programme will achieve this objective.

General guidelines for street tree planting

- A consistent treed character is to be established in the CBD that incorporates a range of tree species
- Careful species selection will ensure planting is appropriate in terms of spacing, capacity of the site to ensure healthy tree growth and contain the tree root ball, climatic conditions and the desired visual effect
- Street planting should be spaced at regular intervals to achieve a continuous avenue character or to define streetscape corridor or view corridors or particular features/elements within the public realm
- Street trees in a single street should be single species and uniform in appearance



The trees in Main Street are one of Bairnsdales' principal assets

- Trees should preferably be planted in ground rather than planter boxes
- Trees should be planted in pits that are of adequate sizing to suit the species anticipated growth
- Protect trees from possible vehicular contact
- A regular auditing process is required to monitor street tree health and quality
- A sustainable design approach to tree planting should consider environmentally responsive irrigation methods (e.g. WSUD techniques), locally sourced tree species and materials
- Avoid placement of road or pavement materials close to tree trunks
- Where street trees are located close to the pavement edge or adjoining parking bays, provide physical barriers such as bollards to reduce damage to trees or planting by vehicles or people

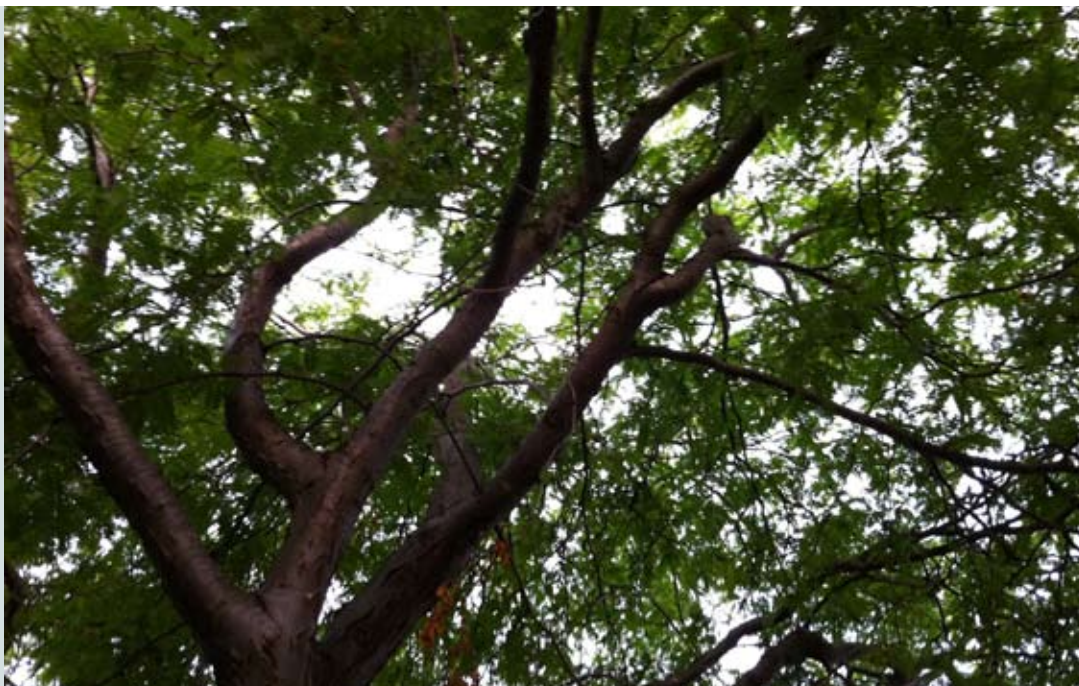
Infill and replacement programme

The street tree programme includes an infill and replacement strategy. This is to form part of Council's regular auditing process to identify gaps in streetscapes where trees are missing as well as poor performing trees that may be at risk of dying or diseased. Infill and replacement trees in high profile and core streets should be a high priority as part of Council's street tree programme.

Adopt a street tree programme

This programme will allow local business/land owners to contribute to establishing new street trees through a small financial contribution and commitment to minor maintenance role (e.g. watering during dry periods, low level pruning). Additional opportunities to 'adopt' existing street trees as part of this programme may be beneficially explored.

*Canopy trees
provide shade
and character to
the streetscape*



Tree removal notes for Council or developer

Tree removal may be required due to poor performance and potential safety risks or may be desirable to make room for proposed development (such as a vehicle crossover).

Removal of street trees requires careful assessment. An assessment of the tree by a Council approved, qualified Arborist is required to determine its significance and health and the feasibility of retaining or removing the tree. Solutions to redesign development proposals should be explored in the first instance, rather than removal. A policy should be developed to assist Council in assessing whether to authorise removal of a street tree.

Management and maintenance

Regular maintenance of existing street trees is important to maintaining their overall health and visual quality. A regular maintenance program should include:

- Regular pruning and watering
- Annual audit of existing tree health and growth conditions (including vigour, branch structure, canopy balance, trunk stability, overall form, hazardous branch/root structure)

- Annual audit to include identification of infill/ replacement locations for following year capital works programme
- Avoid visual barriers by lopping branching below eye level (i.e. below 1.8m) to maintain a clear trunk line
- Periods of extended drought may require a 'drought response plan' to ensure regular watering of street trees
- Establish a proactive programme for detecting and treating infestations and disease
- Street trees should not be pruned to maintain views from private property or to reduce shade or leaf litter
- Establish a GIS database to store audit information.



Street trees will transform the quality of this space

Nicholson Street, Bairnsdale

BAIRNSDALE SUITE – PREFERRED STREET TREE SPECIES LIST

Botanical name	Common name	Native (N) Indigenous (I) Exotic (Ex)	Deciduous (D) Evergreen (Ev)	Approx mature ht x spread (m)
Angophora costata	Smooth-barked Apple	N	Ev	15 - 20 x 15m
Corymbia maculata	Spotted gum	I	Ev	20 x 10m
Eucalyptus melliodora	Yellow box	I	Ev	15 - 20 x 10m
Eucalyptus polyanthemos	Red box	I	Ev	10 - 12 x 10m
Grevillea robusta	Silky oak	N	Ev	10 - 20 x 10m
Lophostemon confertus	Brush box	N	Ev	15 x 10m
Ficus macrocarpa var. hillii	Hill's Weeping Fig	N	Ev	15 x 8m
Fraxinus angustifolia	Narrow leafed ash	E	D	12 x 9m
Gleditsia triacanthos	Honey locust	E	D	9 x 5m
Platanus orientalis	Plane tree	E	D	20 x 15m
Quercus palustris	Pin oak	E	D	20 x 8m
Corymbia citriodora	Lemon scented gum	N	Ev	15 x 10m
Jacaranda mimosifolia	Jacaranda	E	D	10 x 7m
Phoenix canariensis	Date palm	E	Ev	20 x 10m



Top left: Bega pole light

Bottom left: Bega recessed uplight

Middle top: Film projection onto water tower, Auckland
Middle bottom: Feature lighting

Right: Gertrude Street light festival, Fitzroy

STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM LIGHTING

Lighting has the potential to contribute significantly to the quality of Bairnsdale's public realm and the experience of night time users. It can help improve public safety and highlight particular elements and buildings in the city with dramatic effect.

General guidelines

- Lighting should create a pleasant and safe pedestrian environment
- A single consistent theme of lighting styles and fixtures is to be implemented in the CBD
- Lighting fixtures should be scaled to the pedestrian (i.e. pole heights to be in the range of 3.5m-4.5m high)
- Lighting should focus on illuminating the pedestrian zone rather than the vehicular zone

- Provide warm white light that renders colour well to increase the vibrancy of colours and beauty
- Minimise light spill onto adjoining properties and lighting of the night sky
- Lighting fixtures should incorporate framework for banners, artwork and other street amenities (e.g. hanging baskets)
- Replace existing light poles with custom designed high quality street lighting throughout the CBD
- Use energy efficient globes/lamps to reduce energy consumption
- Public laneways should be well lit and form part of the CBD overall lighting scheme
- Use lighting to highlight street art or particular forms



Special lighting of focal points in the town will reinforce their importance within the CBD and make them feel safe

SIGNAGE

Substantial work on a wayfinding strategy for Bairnsdale has already been undertaken. One of the key recommendations was to develop a new family of signs for the city consisting of map based panel signs, directional pointer signs and new street name blades. This new family of signs are to be included as part of the Bairnsdale suite of public realm elements.

Increasing numbers of people use the train to Bairnsdale and some of these are first-time visitors needing good information and guidance to destinations in the CBD.

General guidelines

- Develop a consistent suite of wayfinding and directional signage to be implemented within the CBD that includes replacement of existing signage deemed unsuitable/inadequate
- Utilise existing poles where practical for wayfinding/directional signage
- Avoid cluttering the streetscape and public spaces with excessive signage
- Consider the ability of the public to read, interpret or sight signage and design the signage accordingly.

Commercial / business identification

- Signage should not dominate or visually intrude on the public realm environment, particularly important views and vistas and landmarks
- Commercial and business identification signage should be well-proportioned and designed to fit with the building/structure which it is fixed
- Signage should not obscure architectural features such as façade detailing, windows and door openings, particularly heritage buildings
- Sandwich boards and other signs on footpaths should be placed to maintain a clear pedestrian pathway and be no greater than 1m in height

Australian War Memorial,
London UK



PUBLIC ART

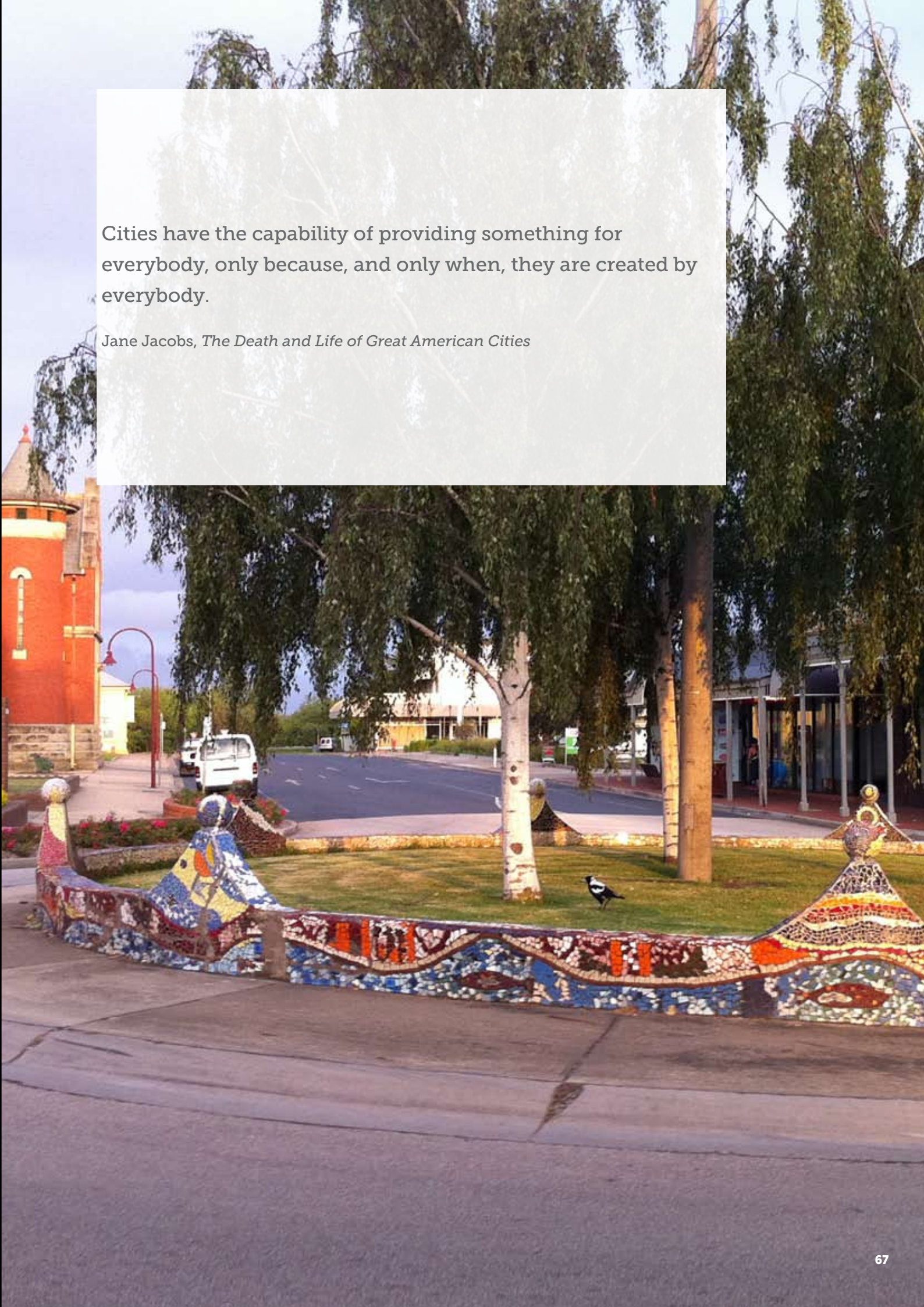
Opportunities for the integration of public art elements should be considered as part of any public realm design process.

General guidelines

- Locate public art in high profile areas and core retail streets
- Public art should be engaging and interactive, particularly for children (including sensory stimulation, tactile elements, art as play equipment)
- Public art may also be educative and interpretive
- Public art may consist of permanent or temporary structures/installations
- Diversity in public art pieces is encouraged, however pieces should form part of a visually cohesive and coordinated suite
- Location of alternative settings for art exhibitions,

Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*



REFERENCES

Revitalising laneways in inner city Brisbane – <http://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/3253>

Forgotten spaces: revitalising Perth's Laneways – <http://perth.wa.gov.au/documentdb/941>

Melbourne Planning Scheme – Clause 22.20 CBD Lanes – http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/melbourne/ordinance/22_lpp20_melb.pdf

City of Melbourne – Love Your Laneway initiative – <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/ForResidents/StreetCleaningandGraffiti/Pages/LoveYourLaneway.aspx>

Cities for People, Jan Gehl

Life and Death of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs

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