

# Newcastle **Urban Renewal** Strategy 2012



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## Have your say

We encourage you to view the urban renewal strategy and to submit your views on the future of Newcastle city centre. The draft strategy is on exhibition until 17 March 2013. The urban renewal strategy will be available at:

- [www.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au)
- Department of Planning & Infrastructure (Head Office) Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney
- Department of Planning & Infrastructure (Newcastle Office) Level 2, 26 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle
- City of Newcastle Administration Centre 282 King Street, Newcastle

#### Community information forums

Community information forums will be held during the exhibition period to allow the community to speak to departmental and council planners (times and venues will be widely publicised).

#### Lodgement of submissions

Submissions can be lodged:

- via the department's website [www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals)
- directly to [urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au)
- by fax to (02) 9228 6555
- or by post to GPO Box 39 Sydney NSW 2001

#### Further information

Information Centre 1300 305 695

# Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012

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# Executive Summary



## Executive summary

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**This urban renewal strategy considers the suitability of the Newcastle city centre for urban renewal. It outlines a clear strategy underpinned by a range of initiatives, and an implementation plan to support the revitalisation of Newcastle over the next 25 years. The strategy proposes a framework for the city to successfully grow and identifies initiatives to improve the city's economy, access, connections and the quality and attractiveness of the public domain, all of which are catalysts for encouraging development. It supports the government's recent decision to replace rail services with bus services from a new transport interchange at Wickham.**



Newcastle has undergone significant change over the past 30 years. Previously based on heavy industry, the city's economy has now diversified, with education, health care and finance sectors all experiencing strong growth. In addition to economic growth, the past decade has seen the Newcastle local government area (LGA) experience a sustained population increase.

This combination of economic and population change has provided opportunity for the reshaping of parts of the city centre. Most notably, the Honeysuckle Precinct has transformed the city's former railway yards into a new waterfront commercial and residential area.

Despite this success, parts of the city centre have experienced decline, impeded most recently by the Global Financial Crisis. There has been concerted government and private sector effort to address these challenges and develop solutions to stimulate change and renewal.

This urban renewal strategy for the Newcastle city centre was prepared by the Director-General of the Department of Planning & Infrastructure under State Environmental Planning Policy (Urban Renewal) 2010 (Urban Renewal SEPP). It seeks to build upon previous work undertaken by the City of Newcastle, the Department of Planning & Infrastructure, the Hunter Development Corporation and other government agencies to recommend an integrated package of initiatives aimed at developing a solid basis for the long-term successful renewal of the city centre. It is supported by extensive technical work in the areas of economics, transport, heritage and public domain.

There is no single answer to the renewal of Newcastle city. Rather, a multi-faceted strategy underpinned by a suite of initiatives will provide a clear framework for urban renewal to occur over time. The strategy for Newcastle city centre's urban renewal needs to go beyond recommended changes to the planning framework, and encompass other aspects of city making that have been proven to be successful ingredients for revitalisation elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

The delivery of this urban renewal strategy and specific initiatives will occur through a collaborative partnership of many stakeholders in varying capacities, including local and state government, the private sector, community organisations and the people of Newcastle. The initiatives will need to be delivered in stages over the short, medium and long-term. Some are suited to being trialled in a temporary form, making them suitable for immediate action and change.

The strategy and initiatives have inter-related components which can be broadly categorised as place-based, economic and transport-related.

Several key initiatives will have significant short-term benefits as well as being catalysts for stimulating a wider change in the city centre. Prioritising their implementation is recommended. This includes:

- establishing a university campus in the city centre to stimulate and drive demand for commercial and retail floor space, introduce a student resident and worker population, and create synergies with established businesses and industry sectors

- revitalising Hunter Street Mall into a distinct retail, entertainment, leisure and residential precinct to catalyse other renewal in the east end, including nearby major landholdings
- reshaping Hunter Street as a key city destination to promote activity, business opportunities, events and other uses in identified nodes. Reshaping can start with less permanent measures on a trial or temporary basis
- providing additional connections across the rail corridor for pedestrians, cyclists and cars
- appointing a Local Business Coordinator to prepare and implement a Business Improvement Plan
- attracting more residents into the city centre to support and build a vibrant and viable city centre
- promoting a higher mode shift to public transport to reduce the number of cars in the city centre, encourage activity and support for business, and utilise existing infrastructure and services.

An implementation plan supports the strategy and provides a framework for delivery of renewal over the life of the plan. It lists identified initiatives along with an indication of the key agency(s) responsible. Indicative timeframes are divided into short (1 - 3 years), medium (3 - 8 years), and long-term (greater than 8 years). The implementation plan can be used to guide future decision making and to measure the progress and success of urban renewal in Newcastle's city centre.

## Vision

*Newcastle will continue to grow and evolve to strengthen its position as the Hunter region’s capital. The city centre’s location and setting between the river and ocean make Newcastle a compact, people-friendly city with unique attributes.*

*Newcastle city centre will be a vibrant regional hub and attractive destination for businesses, residents and visitors, providing accessible and suitable employment opportunities, a choice of retail and other services, and local, national and international investment opportunities.*



Figure A Artist's impression of Wheeler Place upgrade (JMD Design 2012)



Figure B Artist's impression of a new connection to the waterfront (ARUP 2012)

# Guiding principles

These guiding principles have been applied in the strategic planning for Newcastle's urban renewal:

## ***1. Opportunities to grow and expand***

Provide adequately zoned land to ensure the ongoing economic sustainability of the city and accommodate anticipated growth and trends.

Identify and monitor sites and areas suitable for large-scale retail and commercial development.

Support clustering of activity in strategic locations

## ***2. Economic viability with enhanced choice and competition***

The city centre supports a diverse range of retail, commercial and residential uses.

Promote development that provides increased consumer choice and strong, diverse services to minimise loss of business to competing centres.

Promote flexibility to accommodate emerging trends in retailing and other uses where they improve the city centre.

## ***3. Busy and vibrant city centre***

The city centre should have the opportunity to develop its own character and identity that reflects the needs and aspirations of the community.

This identity can positively influence the branding and marketing of the city centre, assist with attraction of new investment, and give a strong sense of community and place.

## ***4. Integrity and viability***

The growth and development of the city centre should support and reinforce the existing integrity and uniqueness of Newcastle. This includes supporting and encouraging the adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings that contribute to the rich fabric of the city. This should be supported by the planning framework and designed to encourage innovation.

## ***5. Investment, employment and business growth***

Population growth in the city centre will increase demand for jobs and services, necessitating additional investment. Growth and expansion of existing businesses must be supported through the planning framework, with suitable land use zoning and development controls.

Support for existing and emerging business is vital for the long-term viability of the city centre through targeted investment attraction strategies.

## ***6. Transport, access and connectivity***

Maximise accessibility and convenience of public transport to and within the city centre, and prioritise a range of transport modes to reduce private vehicle use.

Promote connections and way-finding between precincts and to the waterfront, and encourage pedestrian activity throughout the city centre.

Support infrastructure and public domain improvements to attract people to the city centre.

## ***7. Housing mix and affordability***

Delivering of more residential development in the city centre will enhance vibrancy and viability through increased day and night activity, and support for jobs and services.

Encourage a range of housing types for a variety of markets, including student and seniors housing.

## ***8. Retail variety***

Support supermarkets on appropriate sites and provide a range of convenient retail options to enhance competition, thereby maintaining the economic viability of the city centre.

Recognising the regional demand for bulky goods retailing and encouraging its location within or surrounding the city centre will help ensure its viability, while protecting existing industrial land within the LGA.

Reinforce main street shopping as a unique experience

## ***9. Provide for future employment growth***

Promote a commercial core that provides for a range of employment-generating activities.

Cluster shared resources and services to attract new business.

Employment-zoned land that can accommodate relatively large floor plates should be preserved, so that the city centre is the primary location for commercial office, entertainment, civic and community uses. This is a priority in meeting the future needs of both the city and the wider region.

## Strategy

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This urban renewal strategy is multi-faceted and underpinned by a number of specific initiatives, broadly categorised as place-based, economic and transport-related. The strategy has the following key components:

- an amended planning framework that promotes growth, activity, development and well-located land uses
- a place-making approach to the future development of the city
- physical improvements to the city's key public domain areas
- a series of economic initiatives to support renewal
- a strategy to promote transport, access and connectivity to and within the city centre
- an implementation plan that sets a clear delivery framework.

Achieving enhanced physical and visual connections between the city centre and the waterfront has been a key objective of the strategy. The findings and outcomes of this urban renewal strategy support the government's recent decision that bus services will replace rail services from a new transport interchange at Wickham and this will allow for new and improved movement around the city.



Figure C Artist's impression of Hunter Street Mall upgrade (JMD Design 2012)

## Place-based initiatives

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The city centre is made up of a number of distinct character areas that together form a vibrant city centre offering a range of experiences. The place-based initiatives seek to reinforce and support development of these character areas, promote development of key sites and buildings that respond to each area, and protect key views, vistas and city landmarks. They also account for practical constraints like flooding and mine subsidence.



**Reshaping Hunter Street as the main street and key destination within the city** and promoting activity, business opportunities, events and other uses in identified nodes along Hunter Street and in all of the city's key public domain areas



**Revitalising Hunter Street Mall** into a distinct retail, entertainment, leisure and residential precinct as a catalyst for renewal in the east end



**Strengthening the civic precinct** as the main civic, educational and cultural hub of Newcastle and promoting specific physical improvements to Wheeler Place



**Positioning the west end as the city's future CBD**, protecting employment land and promoting specific physical improvements around Birdwood Park and to Cottage Creek



**Recognising Newcastle's heritage as an asset** and core component of place-making, and encouraging innovation

# Economic initiatives

City centres with diverse economic bases are more likely to be successful and attract new investment when compared to centres that rely on single industries for growth (Glaeser, 2011). While it is important to have a critical mass of commercial development in city centres, they also need to support uses outside normal business hours, such as retail, cultural and other services, to be dynamic and to attract trade and activity. The economic initiatives are based on best practice approaches to instigating investment and urban renewal, and will be supported by place-based initiatives and planning framework changes. They seek to strengthen diversity and resilience of the city centre’s economy.



**Diversification of the economy** ensuring resilience into the future by encouraging new industries and sectors such as cultural, sustainable energy generation and distribution, education, training and research, port operations, freight and logistics

**Planning for 10,000 additional jobs to 2036**, promoting the city centre as the main location for commercial office tenancies, and providing enough land in the right locations

**Planning for 6,000 additional dwellings by 2036** to support and build a vibrant and viable city centre, increase demand for services and drive employment growth

**Promoting a university presence and educational hub** in the city centre to stimulate and drive demand for commercial and retail floor space, and create synergies with established businesses and industry sectors where innovation can occur in a unique setting

**Encouraging additional retail trade back into the city centre** by reinforcing existing retail hubs, developing Business Improvement Plans and by attracting retail variety in strategic locations, including boutique, speciality, supermarket and department stores in the east end, and bulky goods retailing in the west end

**Providing a developer contributions regime** that supports renewal and can fund upgrade works

## Transport-related initiatives

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A balanced and integrated transport network is an important component to the city centre's urban renewal, and of creating an active and liveable city centre. The transport initiatives consolidate previous recommendations into a single strategy that will support enhanced connections and access to and within the city centre.



**Promoting a shift to public transport in the city centre** by investigating strategic bus corridors, park-and-ride facilities, improved bus stops, behaviour change programs, and improving connections between transport modes



**Creating a connected pedestrian and cyclist network** by improving the physical environment to encourage more people to walk and cycle, providing end-of-trip facilities and implementing council's cycling and pedestrian strategies



**Providing dedicated cycle lanes in Hunter Street**, supporting it as a key transport and movement corridor in the city centre to promote a balance between the car, public transport and active transport



**Providing new and enhanced connections across the rail corridor** for all users



**Improving the efficiency of the road network** including intersection upgrades to provide for all transport modes

**Managing the impact of carparking** through an overall carparking cap, reviewing commercial carparking rates, promoting innovation for heritage and large development sites, and investigating car pooling and sharing programs

## Planning framework

The basis of the existing planning framework was introduced in 2008 in an attempt to promote growth in the city centre through very generous height and floor space ratio (FSR) controls, and extensive mixed use and commercial core zones. The result is a lack of focus as to where development should occur, little differentiation between the commercial core and mixed use zone, and the promotion of development types that are not currently feasible at the FSRs and heights allowed. There is also a lack of clarity in the current framework about some of the city's constraints, including mine subsidence and flooding.

Changes to the planning framework are proposed to support the urban renewal strategy and initiatives. These will involve amended maps for zoning, FSR, heights and design excellence, and amended clauses within the Local Environment Plan (LEP).

**Zoning:** Changes concentrate activity around hubs in Civic, the east end and the west end.

**Heights:** Changes optimise development opportunities, acknowledge constraints and context, and reflect economically viable building envelopes

**FSRs:** Changes to FSRs align with changes to height-generating building envelopes that are appropriate to land uses and site constraints

**Benefits:** Simplification of FSR controls provides more flexibility for different land use mixes that can be calibrated to suit the market.

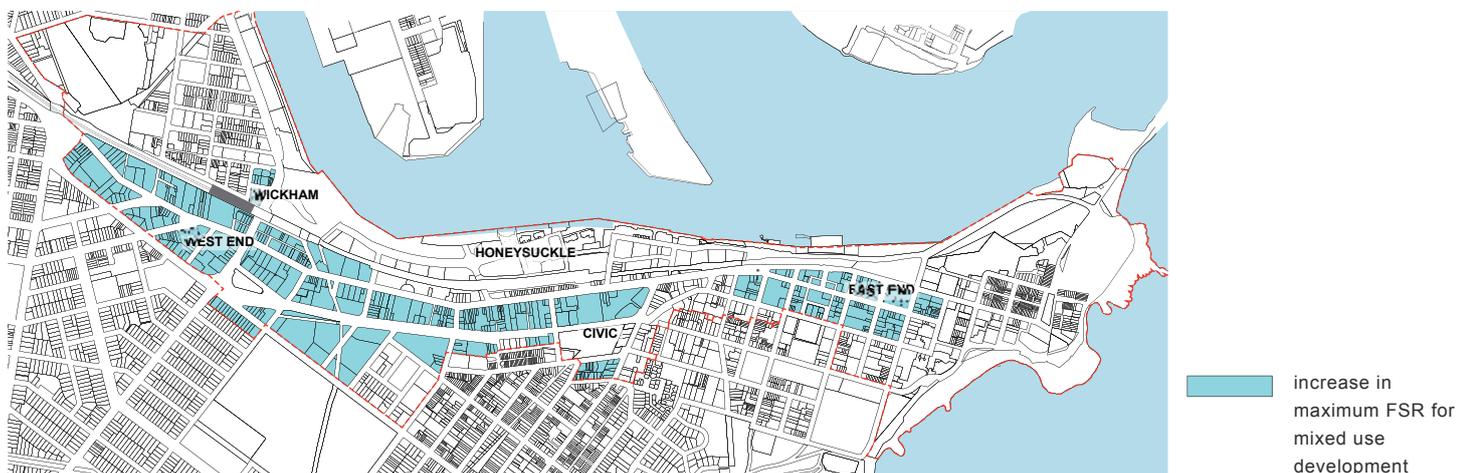


Figure D Sites benefiting from increased FSR for mixed use development

# Zoning

Amendments to the zoning will:

- ensure there is emphasis on Hunter Street with clearly defined activity areas to support the economy and local business
- provide the right employment and housing land supply and intensity for the projected growth
- differentiate between the commercial core and mixed use zones to send a clear message about their future direction and suitable uses
- reduce the extent of commercial core and mixed use zoning in locations that currently compete with the city centre’s activity hubs and established cores, and instead differentiate these areas to reflect an appropriate character and built form
- provide for high density residential development at the edges of the city centre.

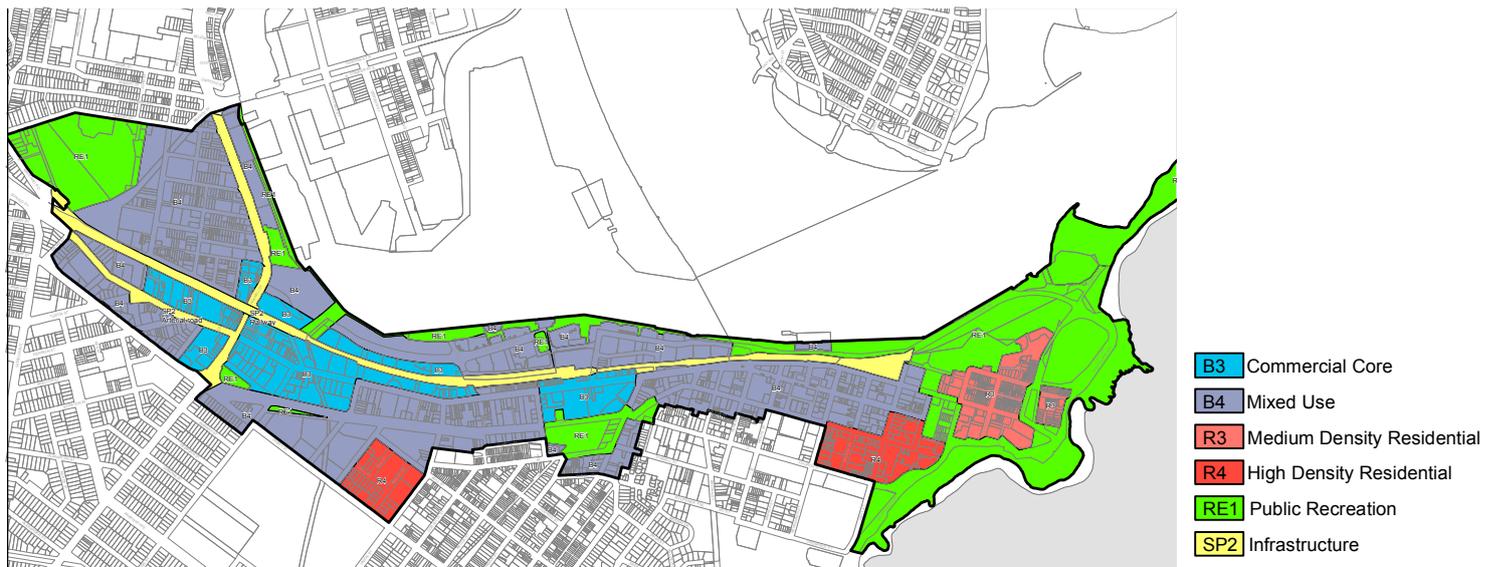


Figure E Proposed zoning

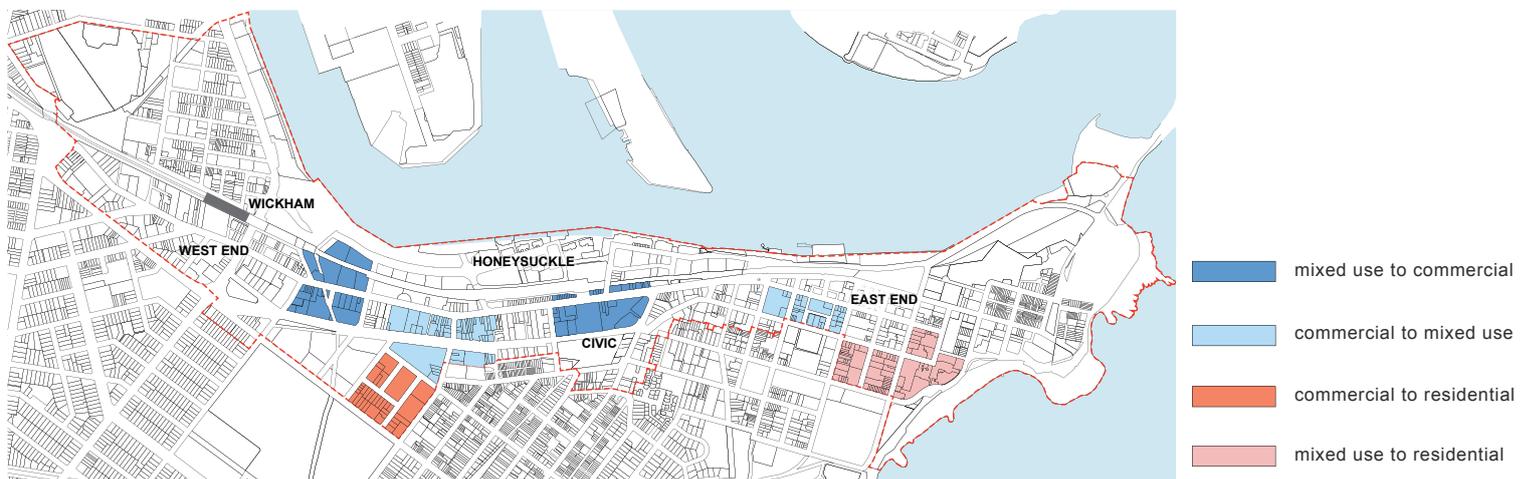


Figure F Sites affected by proposed zoning changes

# Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

Amendments to FSR controls will:

- simplify the FSR map and controls to reflect what can realistically be achieved, make them easier and clearer to interpret, and provide more certainty for stakeholders
- increase the achievable FSRs for mixed use development across the city centre.

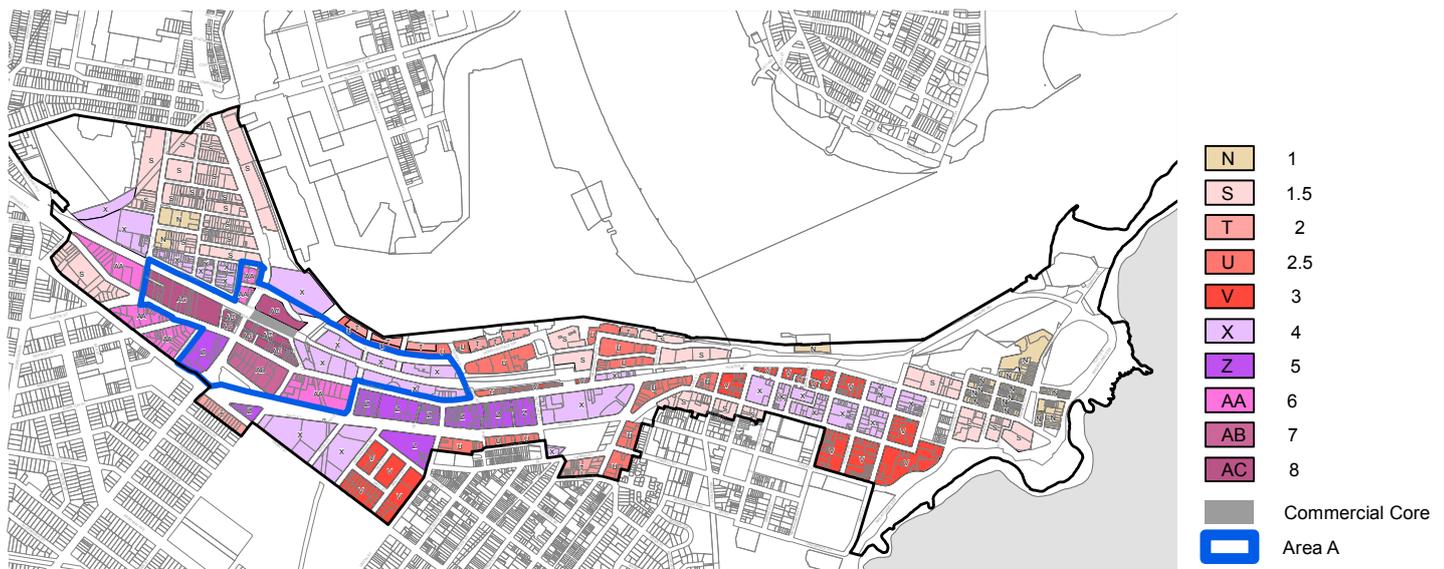


Figure G Proposed FSR

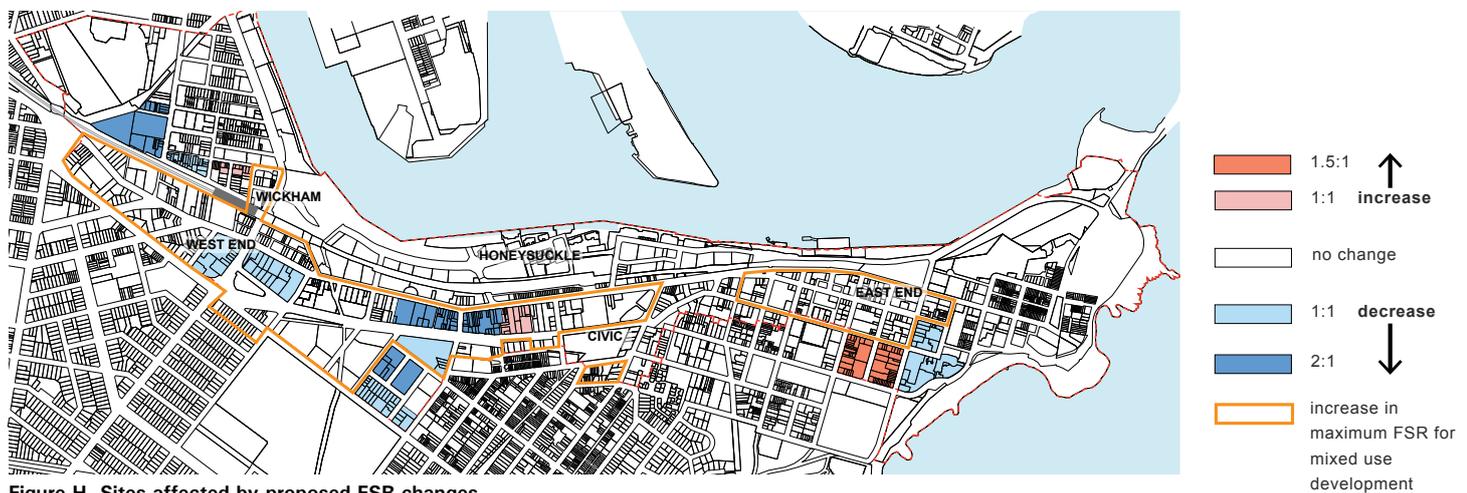


Figure H Sites affected by proposed FSR changes

# Heights

Amendments to the allowable heights will:

- reduce building heights where testing has confirmed a lack of feasibility as well as in areas of the city where a transition in height is needed between the taller city buildings and surrounding lower-scaled areas
- ensure the built form responds appropriately to the heritage character and topography of Newcastle
- provide appropriate controls on key redevelopment sites along with a range of permitted uses to encourage their development.

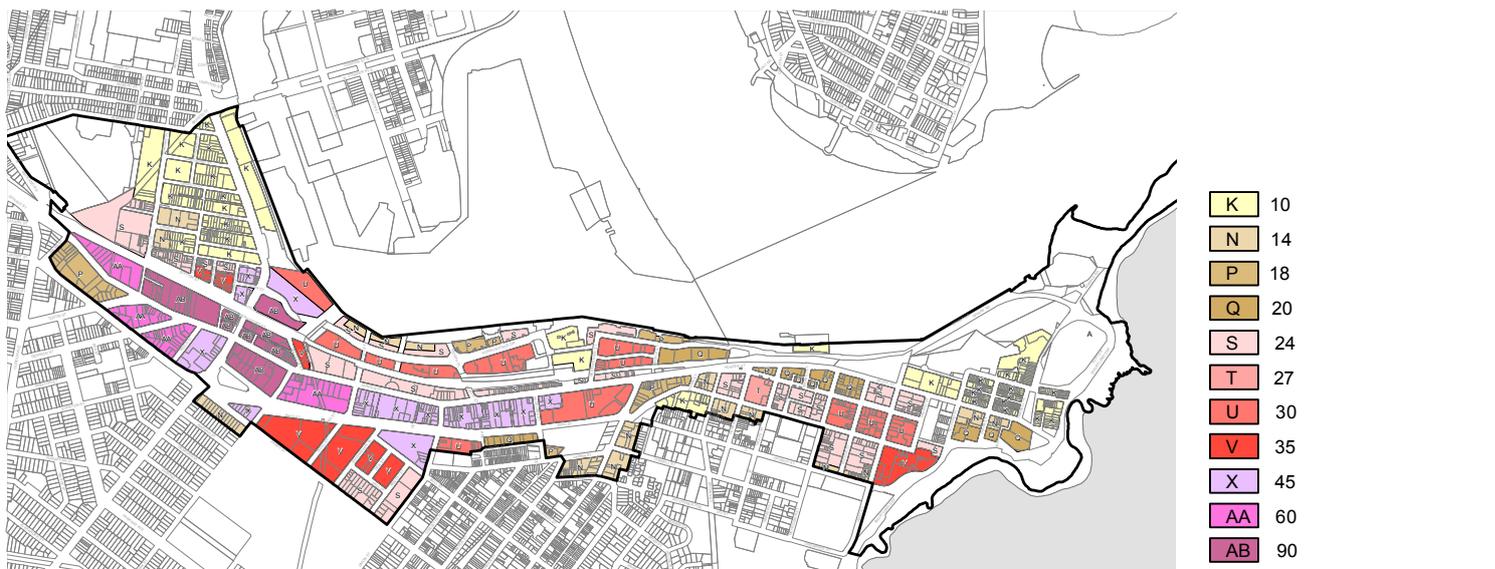


Figure I Proposed heights

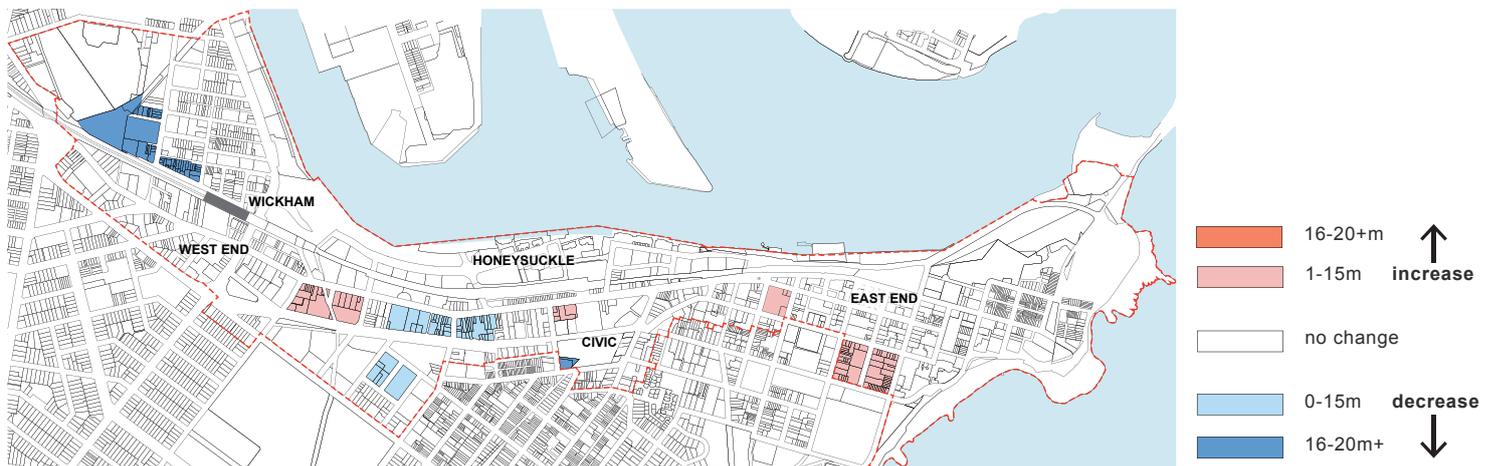


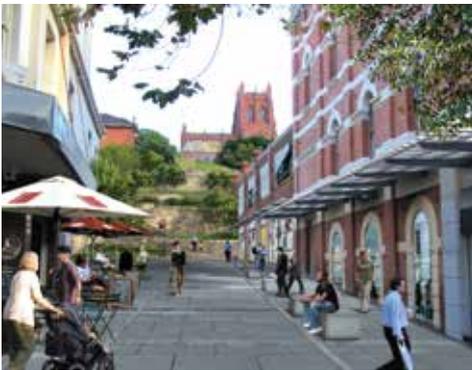
Figure J Sites affected by proposed height changes

# Development Control Plan (DCP)

It is also proposed to amend the DCP to consolidate the parts relating to the east and west ends of the city centre, provide updated controls to support the urban renewal initiatives, and add some new objectives for specific parts of the city centre in recognition of their location, size and development potential. These 'special areas' will have a key role to play in place-making and defining the character of each nominated activity area, and will give certainty and direction to their redevelopment.

## Special areas:

1. Hunter Street Mall
2. Crown Street
3. Civic
4. The Emporium & Devonshire Street
5. Cottage Creek
6. Birdwood Park
7. The Stores Site and surrounds
8. Wickham railway edge
9. Wickham Village
10. Honeysuckle Precinct



Morgan Street, off Hunter Street Mall



Crown Street



Devonshire Street



Cottage Creek at Hunter Street



Birdwood Park edge



The Stores Site on Hunter Street

# Implementation

To achieve real change and realise the potential of the city centre, the initiatives already discussed will need to be implemented over time, by a number of stakeholders. Some initiatives will have more of an impact on their own or will be catalysts for others, with significant flow-on effects.

Ultimately renewal will rely on the co-operation of a range of stakeholders including state government, local government, the private sector and the community. The implementation timeframe will commence in the short-term, but will then look towards medium and long-term actions for delivery over the life of the plan.

In addition to the already identified catalyst projects, some measures that can be implemented with relative ease in the short-term are:



**Planning framework amendments,** Local Environmental Plan (LEP), Development Control Plan (DCP), Civic Improvement Plan (CIP), Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, master plan for Wickham



**Hunter Street temporary measures** as a prelude to permanent upgrade including trial cycleways. Start planning and detailing the permanent upgrade



**Hunter Street Mall upgrade** remove clutter, integrate pedestrians and vehicles and provide activity zones and new street planting



**Newcastle economic strategy,** branding, marketing, Business Improvement Plan, cultural infrastructure action plan, containing expansion of out-of-centre retail



**Promoting a higher mode shift to public transport** through behaviour change programs, peak clearways, bus priority at intersections, integrated ticketing

**Introduce carpooling and car share schemes,** cap city parking, expand commuter carparking control area

# Overview of initiatives

## Wickham station relocation

as part of a new bus/rail interchange west of Stewart Avenue, located adjacent to emerging CBD



## Hunter Street upgrade

activity zones, cycleway, peak clearway, landscaping, public transport

## Stores site special area



improve

## West end

future CBD

new connections

improve

## Hunter Street upgrade

activity zones, cycleway, peak clearway, landscaping, public transport

new residential



## Birdwood Park special area

## Cottage Creek

special area  
green pedestrian corridor

## Devonshire Street special area



# Newcastle Economic Strategy

City centre branding and marketing strategy, cultural infrastructure action plan and business improvement plan



**Wheeler Place and Hunter Street upgrade**



**Hunter Street Mall upgrade**

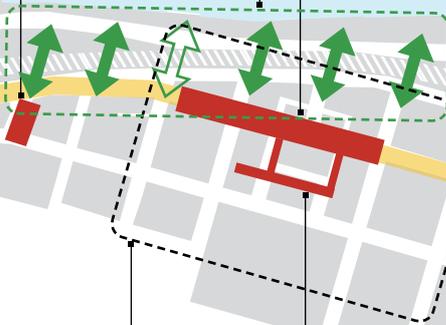
**Crown Street special area**



**10,000 additional jobs by 2036**

**6,000 additional dwellings by 2036**

**new connections**



**new residential**

## Civic

government, cultural and education  
Civic Park: the city's 'living room'



## East end

boutique retail, entertainment, leisure and residential

## East end laneways special area



## Hunter Street Upgrade

activity zones, cycle-way, peak clearway, landscaping, public transport

## Defining the city centre

The city centre is located at the northern end of the Newcastle metropolitan area. Figure K shows the boundaries of the study area.

The study area is bounded by the Hunter River and Maryville to the north, the Tasman Sea to the east, the suburbs of The Hill, Cooks Hill and Hamilton East to the south and Hamilton and Islington to the west. Key features in the study area include the Hunter River waterfront, Hunter Street, King Street and Cottage Creek.

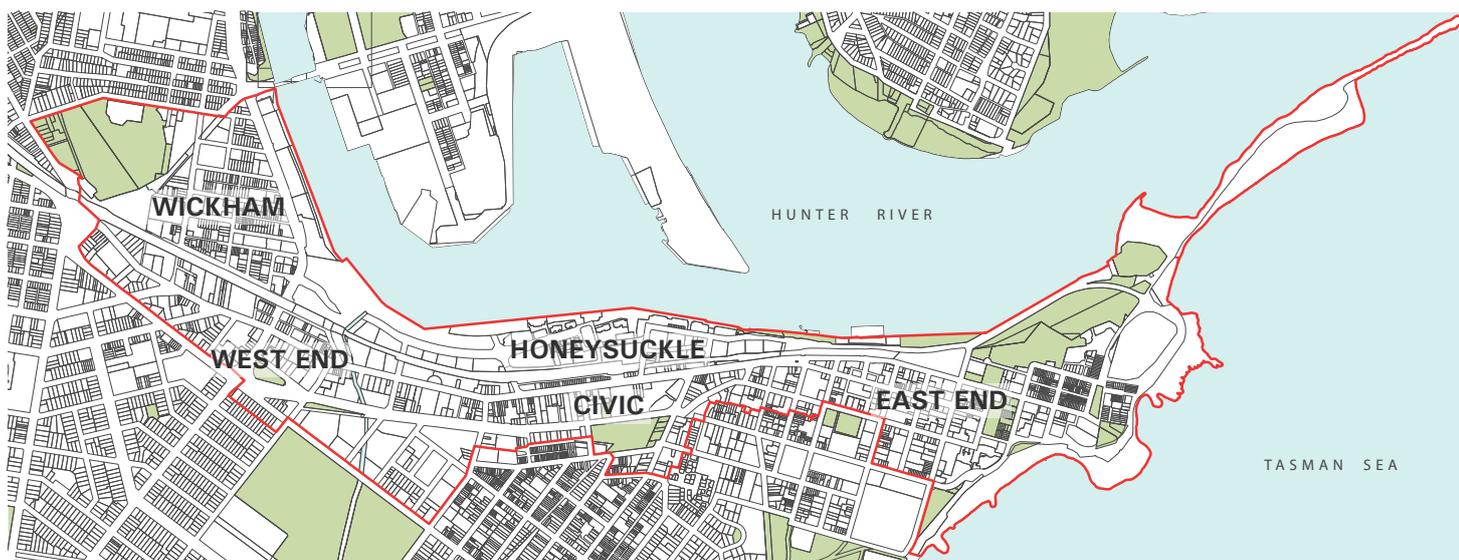


Figure K Newcastle potential urban renewal precinct as identified in the Urban Renewal SEPP

## About the urban renewal strategy

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This strategy has been prepared in accordance with clause 9 of the Urban Renewal SEPP and seeks to consider the underlying issues impacting the performance, development and potential of the Newcastle city centre. It investigates and analyses key issues, and proposes a suite of recommendations to support and encourage renewal and investment in the Newcastle city centre.

The strategy is provided in six parts:

- Part 1: Strategic context
- Part 2: Methodology
- Part 3: Place analysis
- Part 4: Initiatives
- Part 5: Amended planning framework
- Part 6: Implementation

The technical studies that were used to inform the directions of the urban renewal strategy are included in separate appendixes. It is important to note that these do not form part of the strategy and therefore feedback is neither required nor being sought on them. They were prepared prior to the government's decision on transport services and were therefore written to enable the successful implementation of all possible transport arrangements.

