



# RHODES EAST PRIORITY INVESTIGATION AREA

**VISUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2017**

RobertsDay  
*planning. design. place*

 **NSW**  
GOVERNMENT | Planning &  
Environment

 **City of**  
Canada Bay



# INTRODUCTION

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RobertsDay has been engaged by the Department of Planning and Environment and City of Canada Bay to develop an urban planning and urban design framework for the Rhodes East Priority Investigation Area and to provide the basis for this Visual Assessment (VA).

The VA responds to the requirements of the Sydney Harbour Catchment Regional Environmental Plan (REP) 2005 and the Sydney Harbour Foreshores and Waterways Area Development Control Plan (DCP) 2005. Consideration is also given to the requirements of the Rhodes Peninsular Open Space Master Plan.

The Rhodes East Priority Investigation Area project aims to provide new housing within the Rhodes Peninsular with a coordinated delivery of infrastructure to ensure that the growth will be supported by improved public open space and community facilities to create attractive places to live and enhance people's lifestyles and living standards.

The VA focuses on the potential impact that future development may have on the riverine visual landscape, and assesses the impact from the surrounding and adjacent publicly accessible areas. The key vantage points have been determined through a site visit and focus on what are considered the most prevalent views of the precinct.

The scope of this VA is primarily focused on the views from the public realm. However, a selection of views from two buildings in Rhodes West have also been included. Thus, the report is structured in two main sections, one dedicated to the significant views from the public realm, with the second section focussing on views from private apartments located in Rhodes West.

The report outlines the proposed built form outcomes and intent established during the planning and design stages and tests the Rhodes East proposal against the performance criteria outlined in the Sydney Harbour Foreshores and Waterways DCP.

# BACKGROUND

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The assessment is informed by the following requirements:

## Sydney Harbour Catchment REP

The Sydney Harbour Catchment REP outlines the following principles relating to the scenic quality of the foreshore and waterways.

*The matters to be taken into consideration in relation to the maintenance, protection and enhancement of the scenic quality of foreshores and waterways are as follows:*

1. *the scale, form, design and siting of any building should be based on an analysis of the land on which it is to be erected, and the adjoining land, and the likely future character of the locality;*
2. *development should maintain, protect and enhance the unique visual qualities of Sydney Harbour and its islands, foreshores and tributaries;*
3. *the cumulative impact of water-based development should not detract from the character of the waterways and adjoining foreshores.*

## Rhodes Peninsular Open Space Master Plan

The Rhodes Peninsular Open Space Master Plan sets the requirement for visual coherence in the Public Domain:

*'the creation of a clear and legible network of open space throughout by highlighting and enhancing the key character elements. Views to and from open spaces and adjoining areas are to be maintained and enhanced whilst public art is utilised to communicate historical and cultural values.'*

## SYDNEY HARBOUR FORESHORES & WATERWAYS AREA DCP FOR SREP (SYDNEY HARBOUR CATCHMENT) 2005

The Sydney Harbour Catchment DCP provides performance-based criteria and guidelines relating to matters such as foreshore access, visual and natural environments, recreation and maritime industrial uses with the aim of:

- *protecting ecological communities within the area covered by SREP (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005;*
- *ensuring that the scenic quality of the area is protected or enhanced;*
- *providing siting and design principles for new buildings and waterside structures within the area; and*
- *identifying potential foreshore access locations in the area.*

Further consideration to the Performance Criteria set by the DCP is outlined in the following pages.

# BACKGROUND

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The **SYDNEY HARBOUR FORESHORES & WATERWAYS AREA DCP FOR SREP (SYDNEY HARBOUR CATCHMENT) 2005** defines the landscape character types along the Rhodes East foreshore, as highlighted by the adjacent map.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 15

### STATEMENT OF CHARACTER AND INTENT

These areas have a high proportion of built structures characterised by industrial and institutional uses in the foreground and residential development located further from the foreshore. Part of the Parramatta River Regional Park is located within this Character Area. Development can occur within these areas provided that the following issues are taken into consideration:

- the contribution industrial uses make to the economics and vitality of the river and their need for location on the waters edge;
- establishment of open space and recreational opportunities;
- mitigating against incompatible land uses; and
- preserving the mangrove screening along the foreshore and reducing the stark contrast of built elements behind these natural features.

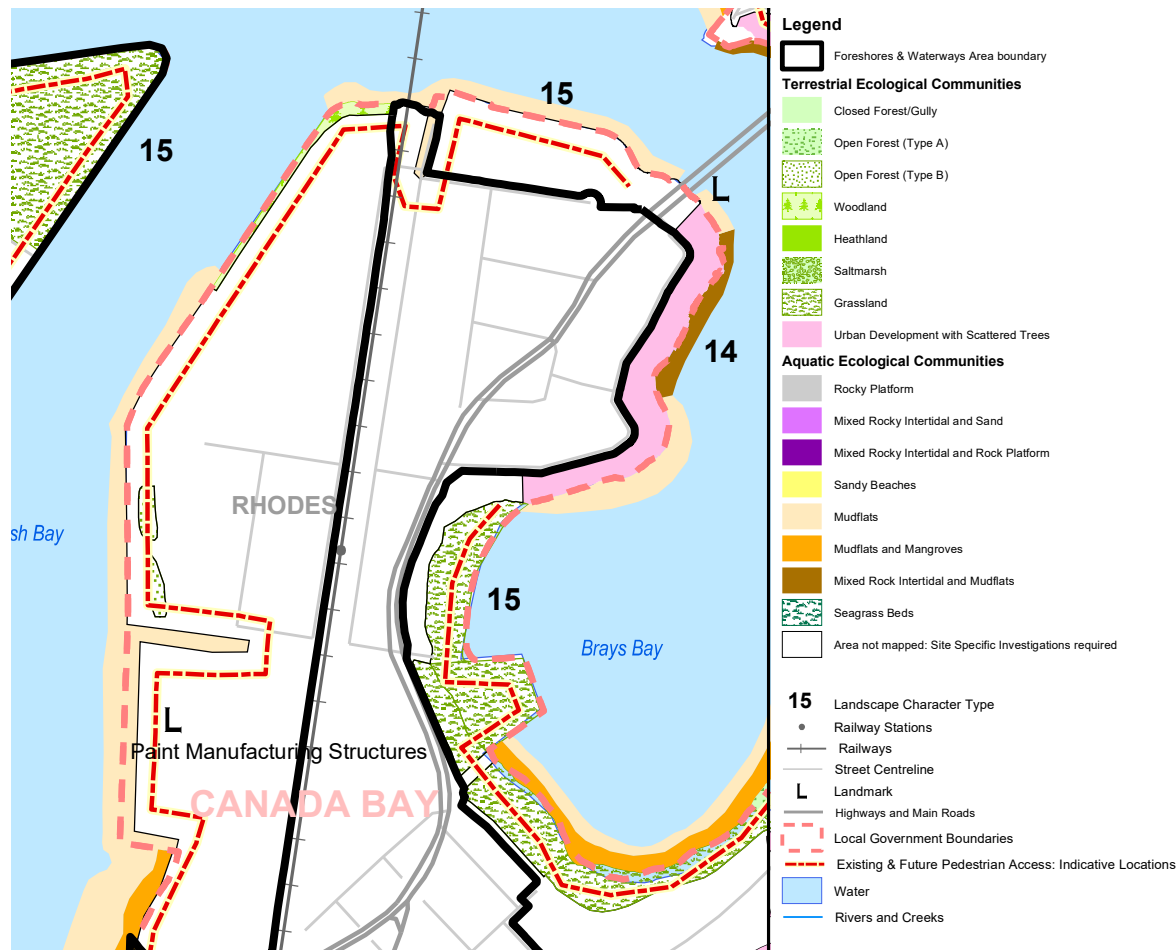
### PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Any development within these areas is to satisfy the following criteria:

- the industrial uses along the river are maintained and preserved. Pressure for these uses to relocate is minimised;
- design and mitigation measures are provided between incompatible land uses to minimise noise and amenity impacts;
- remaining natural elements along the foreshore are preserved to maintain the natural screen along the foreshore; and
- vegetation is integrated within the development to minimise the contrast between natural and built elements.



# SCOPE



The Scope of the Visual Assessment is to address the potential visual impacts and changes to the landscape arising from the proposed development at Rhodes East and to:

- Review the strategic planning requirements and the principles and visual amenity objectives of the Sydney Harbour REP and DCP to assess visual impact;
- Identify the assumptions used in the VA;
- Review the existing local context and site information relevant to the coastal visual environment, including existing landform, built form, adjoining land uses, statutory controls and development limitations, visibility of the site from key locations and the degree and nature of use in these locations;
- Identify and locate the key vantage points;
- Describe the components of the Rhodes East Urban Design proposal that require assessment to determine visual impact;
- Document the transformation of the development affected area and the broader community benefits resulting from this transformation that should be considered holistically with respect to any visual impact;
- Assess the significance of impacts on visual amenity and landscape character changes from the vantage points that will occur as a result of the redevelopment of Rhodes East; and
- Document the key findings and proposed mitigations strategies where applicable.

# METHODOLOGY & ASSUMPTIONS

The methodology used to inform the existing environmental values of the area surrounding the site and the identification of the visual catchment is detailed below.

## 1. Site Visit and Contextual Analysis

Roberts Day inspected a number of locations to understand the scenic qualities and visual prominence of the site and cross reference these locations with aerial photography to identify areas from which the proposed Rhodes East development could potentially be seen;

Identification of the visual catchment, defined as the potentially affected areas and vantage points which are accessible to the public including surrounding and adjoining public spaces, suburbs and site access points;

Site verification of a publicly accessible visual catchment with photographic documentation to provide a representation of typical views from identified areas to the site. These vantage points reflect particular landscape characteristics which contribute to the overall scenic amenity. The vantage points were chosen due to the significant use and exposure of the areas, as well as, the need to understand and document any potential changes to the view and/ or experience of these sites;

The vantage points were chosen because they provide assessment from at least one, if not more, of the following view categories from:

- Publicly accessible foreshore and public recreation spaces;
- Key public transport nodes with high pedestrian affluence; and
- Two prominent existing buildings located in Rhodes West.

## 2. Photomontage

Finalisation of the Rhodes East Master Plan and supporting technical documentation enabled the vantage points to be realistically documented as 'before' and 'after' photomontages. The accuracy of the photomontages is based on the following process and information:

- Plotting the vantage points using survey accurate details of the site and Master Plan proposal;
- Digitally linking the coordinate data into Google Earth (GE);
- Creating a 3D Sketchup model of the terrain;
- Building an indicative Sketchup massing model of the proposed built form consistent with the development intent;
- Digitally linking the model to GE for broader context understanding and to match the model view to the photo position and view angle;
- Photo- editing the hybrid photo/ model views to reflect landscaping, intended built form, and lighting.

The rationale for the vantage points is discussed over the following pages and located on the corresponding map (see page 16).

## 3. Visual Impacts Assessment

A qualitative assessment of the visual impacts and changes to landscape has been undertaken with reference on the **RMS Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance Note: Guidelines for landscape character and visual impact assessment (2013)**.

The determination of the impacts is based on the following criteria:

**Sensitivity** is defined as "The sensitivity of a landscape character zone or view and its capacity to absorb change."

In the case of visual impact this also relates to the type and number of viewers.

**Magnitude** is defined as "The measurement of the scale, form and character of a development proposal when compared to the existing condition". In the case of visual assessment this also relates to how far the proposal is from the viewer.

EIA No4 Guidelines, 2013, RMS

The combined assessment of the sensitivity and magnitude provides the rating for the visual impact as per the table on the following page. Comments and justification is provided for each visual assessment and a summary of the outcomes is provided upon completion of the impact assessments.



## 4. Conclusions

The conclusions of the report are based on the relationship between the visual impact assessment method, as per the **RMS Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance Note: Guidelines for landscape character and visual impact assessment (2013)**, and reflect the development response to each of the planning principles and performance criteria outlined by the **Sydney Harbour Catchment REP and DCP (2005)**.

## 5. Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made:

- Photomontages are generated from photos taken at camera level of approximately 1.7m above natural ground level;
- Existing topography is to be generally maintained within the development and selected vantage points;
- Levels are conceptual and subject to detailed design;
- Development heights are as per the Rhodes East Priority Investigation Area Urban Design Report and proposed LEP amendments;
- Maximum development scenario where additional yield is anticipated in order to deliver improved public benefits (school, new road connections, Leeds Street foreshore plaza); and
- Proposed development at Rhodes West, near the station has planning approval from Sydney Central Planning Panel dated 1 December 2016.

		MAGNITUDE					
		High	High to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Low	Low	Negligible
SENSITIVITY	High	High impact	High Impact	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Negligible impact
	High to Moderate	High Impact	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Negligible impact
	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible impact
	Moderate to Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Moderate-low	Negligible impact
	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Moderate-low	Low impact	Negligible impact
	Negligible	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact

The Visual Impacts assessment table correlating magnitude and sensitivity.

# SITE CONTEXT

## RHODES EAST

Rhodes East is part of the Rhodes Peninsula between Brays Bay and Homebush Bay on the southern bank of the Parramatta River, approximately 16km to the west of Sydney CBD. It has an area of 36ha, is located to the east of the Northern Rail line and is bounded by the Parramatta River to the north and Brays Bay to the east. The study area is currently predominantly residential with light industrial land uses located along the northern edge, adjacent to the Parramatta River and McIlwaine Park to the south.



MCILWAINE PARK



RHODES TRAIN STATION



RAIL AND PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE NEAR LEEDS STREET







# THE SITE

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## A PLAN FOR GROWING SYDNEY

A Plan for Growing Sydney, released in December 2014, details the NSW Government's vision for Sydney's future, as a 'strong global city, a great place to live'. One of the biggest challenges is how best to provide the 726,000 new homes for the extra 2.7 million residents predicted by 2036, while also creating strong, healthy and connected communities.

A Plan for Growing Sydney identifies Rhodes as a Strategic Centre within the Global Economic Corridor. A priority for the Central Sub Region is to:

"Work with Councils to identify suitable locations for housing intensification and urban renewal... particularly around Priority Precincts, established and new centres and along key public transport corridors."

## PRIORITY PRECINCT

Rhodes East was nominated as a potential Priority Precinct by the City of Canada Bay Council in November 2014.

The Priority Precincts program aims to provide for new housing and jobs in centres with good existing or planned transport services and coordinates the delivery of infrastructure to ensure that the growth will be supported by improved public open space and community facilities to make these places attractive places to live and enhance people's lifestyles and living standards.



**RHODES EAST VIEW FROM BRAYS BAY RESERVE**



**LEEDS STREET FORESHORE VIEW FROM MEADOWBANK**





# URBAN DESIGN MASTER PLAN

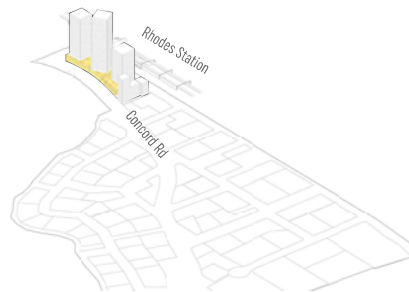
The Rhodes East Master Plan reflects and celebrates the unique characteristics of the place whilst creating a framework to evolve and to become a 21st century transit oriented, human scaled waterfront community.

A variety of experience- based destinations will attract residents and visitors whilst a series of more intimate spaces will create opportunities for smaller gatherings and facilitate the organic growth and maturation of Rhodes East over time.

These special places are connected by green streets and paths and supported by a vibrant, fine grain, activated, pedestrian- focused built form environment.

Delivering the Rhodes East Master Plan will be incremental and long term. A focus on the first three storeys experienced by the pedestrian and a maximum lot size will ensure that the progressive redevelopment sensitively responds to the existing character and built form and maintains a village feel.

All of the design strategies incorporated into the Master Plan reinforce Rhodes East as a 'walkable' community.



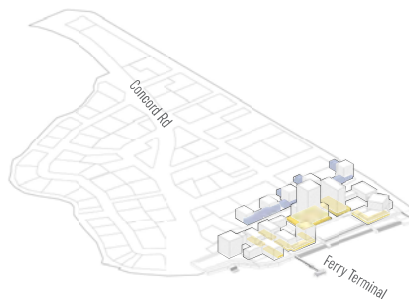
**GATEWAY CHARACTER AREA**



**CONCORD ROAD CHARACTER AREA**



**HIGH POINT CHARACTER AREA**



**LEEDS STREET CHARACTER AREA**







# SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC VIEWS

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The following pages illustrate the relationship between views from prominent public spaces surrounding the Rhodes East Investigation Area. The photo-montages illustrate the relation between existing views and proposed development.

The proposed development at Rhodes West, as mentioned in our assumptions, has been modeled in grey throughout this report, consistent with the planning proposal.



**RHODES PENINSULA VIEW FROM KISSING POINT PARK, ACROSS THE RIVER**

## \_01 Brays Bay Reserve



### Aim:

To understand the visual impact of development proposals from a prominent and popular public open space at Brays Bay;

To assess to what degree the existing trees at Mollwaine Park mitigate views of the future development; and

To test the extent to which the change of landscape features, and contrast between natural and built elements, may alter the existing riverine character.

**Google Earth Coordinates:** 33°49'53.83"S, 151°5'24.81"E

**Site level (RL):** 1.0m

**Distance to site:** approx. 250m

**Focal Length (35mm equivalent):** 33mm

## \_02 Gauthorpe Street



### Aim:

To understand the visual impact of development proposals from a main circulation artery; and

To test the extent to which the change of landscape features may alter the existing urban character.

**Google Earth Coordinates:** 33°49'42.35"S, 151°5'8.49"E

**Site level (RL):** 14m

**Distance to site:** approx. 200m

**Focal Length (35mm equivalent):** 33mm



# SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC VIEWS

## \_03 Meadowbank Wharf



### Aim:

To understand the visual impact of development proposals from an important public transport destination at Meadowbank Wharf; and

To test the extent to which the change of landscape features may alter the existing riverine character.

**Google Earth Coordinates:** 33°49'16.75"S, 151°5'23.63"E

**Site level (RL):** 0.5m

**Distance to site:** approx. 200m

**Focal Length (35mm equivalent):** 33mm

## \_04 Anderson Park



### Aim:

To understand the visual impact of development proposals from a prominent and popular public recreation destination; and

To test the extent to which the change of landscape features may alter the existing riverine character.

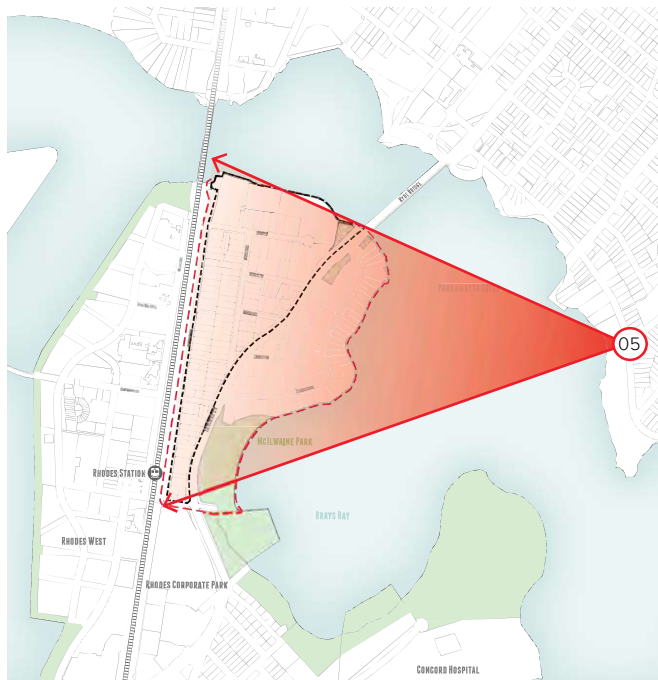
**Google Earth Coordinates:** 33°49'19.71"S, 151°5'42.17"E

**Site level (RL):** 0.5m

**Distance to site:** approx. 300m

**Focal Length (35mm equivalent):** 33mm

## \_05 Kissing Point Park



### Aim:

To understand the visual impact of development proposals from a prominent and popular public recreation destination; and

To test the extent to which the change of landscape features may alter the existing riverine character.

### Google Earth Coordinates:

33°49'42.87"S, 151° 6'4.28"E

Site level (RL): 0.5m

Distance to site: approx. 750m

Focal Length (35mm equivalent): 33mm

## \_06 Blaxland Road



### Aim:

To understand the visual impact of development proposals from an important access point to the site; and

To test the extent to which the change of landscape features may alter the existing urban character.

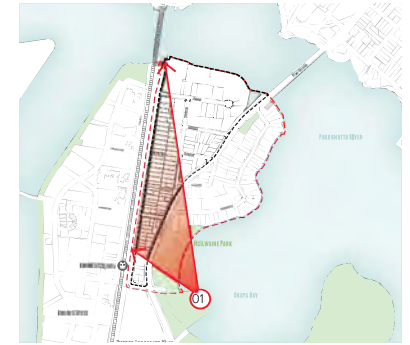
**Google Earth Coordinates:** 33°49'52.94"S, 151° 5'14.20"E

Site level (RL): 12m

Distance to site: approx. 0m

Focal Length (35mm equivalent): 33mm

# VIEW 1\_BRAYS BAY RESERVE



Existing



Proposed



# VIEW 1\_BRAYS BAY RESERVE

The view from Brays Bay reserve is considered to have a MODERATE TO LOW sensitivity due to:

- The only existing built structure is a nearby restaurant; and
- The area is part of a regional foreshore walk;

The magnitude of the proposal in this view is considered MODERATE TO HIGH, as the proposal would:

- Increase the number of high rise buildings seen in the background;
- Development does not exceed the existing heights at Rhodes West;
- No buildings (with the exception of potential structures associated with the River Pool) are developed within 140m of the water, meaning there is little impact on the existing vegetation. The vegetation provides natural screening from this vantage point.

The visual impact for this view is assessed as MODERATE, as it will have limited impact on the existing landscape.

		MAGNITUDE					
		High	High to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Low	Low	Negligible
SENSITIVITY	High	High impact	High Impact	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Negligible impact
	High to Moderate	High Impact	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Negligible impact
	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible impact
	Moderate to Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Moderate-low	Negligible impact
	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Moderate-low	Low impact	Negligible impact
	Negligible	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact

# VIEW 2\_GAUTHORPE STREET



Existing



Proposed

# VIEW 2\_GAUTHORPE STREET

The view from Gauthorpe Street is considered to have a **MODERATE TO LOW** sensitivity assuming that:

- The view is mainly appreciated by local residents which make use of the adjacent streets;
- It is not a high amenity view given the rail line is perceived on the top of the hill; and
- The existing open space along the southern edge of the street has low amenity.

The magnitude of the proposal in this view is considered **MODERATE TO LOW**, assuming that:

- One mid-rise building is visible in the background, beyond the train line;
- The proposed built form is significantly lower than the existing high rise apartment building in the foreground; and
- The pedestrian rail bridge (if built in this location) will improve the visual legibility potentially creating a landmark which improves wayfinding and connection to the adjacent suburb.

The visual impact for this view is assessed as **MODERATE LOW**, as the proposed built form will have low expression when compared with the existing built form.

		MAGNITUDE					
		High	High to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Low	Low	Negligible
SENSITIVITY	High	High impact	High Impact	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Negligible impact
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	Negligible	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact



# VIEW 3\_MEADOWBANK WHARF

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Existing



Proposed

# VIEW 3\_MEADOWBANK WHARF

The view from Meadowbank Wharf is considered to have a **MODERATE** sensitivity assuming that:

- The view can be appreciated by the general public accessing the ferry wharf, and is also located along the Parramatta Valley Cycleway, connecting the river foreshore between Morris Bay Park, in Ryde, and the Parramatta CBD;
- The change in land use, on the southern side of the river, from light industrial to mixed use/ residential will inherently improve the built form aesthetic from this vantage point through increased articulation and building separation; and
- Meadowbank is a precinct which is currently being densified with a prevalence of mid-rise apartment buildings.

The magnitude of the proposal is considered **MODERATE** given that:

- The existing low rise industrial area, with unattractive blank walls and a privatised foreshore, will be replaced with north facing mid-rise active facades and public plaza and promenade;
- The scale of the proposed buildings will be less than the existing buildings at Rhodes West;
- The visual impact will be reduced by the landscape screening and public life along the foreshore promenade and plaza; and
- Built form is broken down by development controls which preserve view corridors and building separation.

The visual impact for this view is assessed as **MODERATE**. However, it is suggested that the proposed foreshore reserve and plaza can greatly improve the perceived amenity on the site.

		MAGNITUDE					
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	Negligible	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact



A view of Meadowbank, located on the northern foreshore of the Parramatta River, opposite Leeds Street. The development establishes a precedent for apartment development along this portion of the river.

# VIEW 4\_ANDERSON PARK

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Existing



Proposed



# VIEW 4\_ANDERSON PARK

The view from Anderson Reserve is considered to have a **MODERATE** sensitivity assuming that:

- The view can be appreciated by the general public from the northern foreshore of the Parramatta River, and is part of the Parramatta Valley Cycleway, connecting the river foreshore between Morrisan Bay Park, in Ryde, and the Parramatta CBD. Cyclists can also ride to Sydney Olympic Park via the Silverwater Bridge; and
- There will be a considerable change to the current land use on the southern side of the river.

The magnitude of the proposal is considered **MODERATE** given that:

- The existing low rise industrial area, with unattractive blank walls and a privatised foreshore, will be replaced with north facing mid-rise active facades and public plaza and promenade;
- The scale of the proposed buildings will be less than the existing buildings at Rhodes West;
- The visual impact will be reduced by the landscape screening and public life along the foreshore promenade and plaza; and
- Built form is broken down by development controls which preserve view corridors and building separation.

The visual impact for this view is assessed as **MODERATE HIGH**. However, it is suggested that the proposed foreshore reserve, plaza and promenade can greatly improve the perceived amenity on the site.

		MAGNITUDE					
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	Negligible	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact	Negligible impact