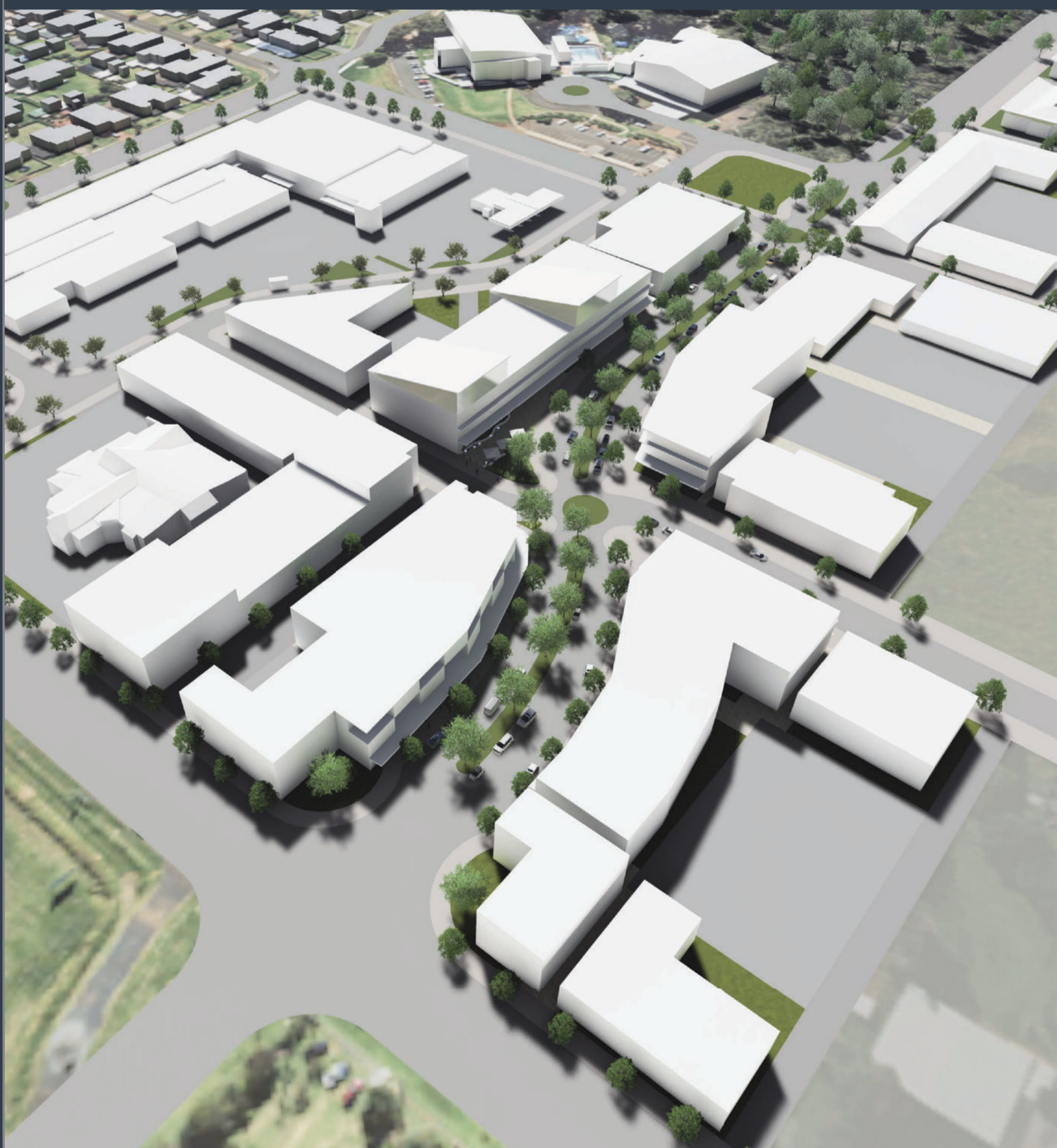


HIGHFIELDS

DRAFT CULTURAL PRECINCT MASTER PLAN

April 2017



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Contacts

Archipelago®
Email: mail@archipelagoarchitects.com.au



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PROCESS & PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Highfields Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan (Draft Master Plan) is being developed to provide Council with a coordinated strategy for the identification, location and provision of cultural facilities in the Highfields area. The Draft Master Plan will act as a catalyst for private investment to ensure that the vision and objectives outlined in the Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West Local Plan (Local Plan) are achieved.

It is intended the Draft Master Plan will be developed with strong community and stakeholder engagement. In this regard, Council has established a Community Reference Group comprising of major landowners, community members and business representatives from the Highfields area as part of the project. In addition, Council's Urban Design and Place-making Panel will provide advice and input into this project at nominated milestones. Archipelago and Urbis will lead engagement activities with both of these groups in addition to attending and presenting at Council's Committee Meeting, Project Control Group / Steering Committee on the project.

Council's Strategic Planning & Economic Development Branch has completed a review of the Local Plan for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. The planning scheme amendment process has been completed with the amendment being adopted by Council and commencing in July 2016.

Separate to this review, Council's Library and Cultural Services Branch has undertaken a review of library facilities in the Toowoomba Region and has identified the need for a library to be constructed in the Highfields area to replace the existing temporary facility. This Draft Master Plan will inform both the optimal location and built form to activate some of the visions identified in the Local Plan.

Council's Community Development and Facilities Branch have also recently undertaken a regional review of its aquatic facilities, including for those at Highfields, which has highlighted the need for upgrades to the existing aquatic facilities in Highfields to provide for year round utilisation.

Given each of these projects and the educational facilities recently constructed and under construction in Highfields, and the role of Highfields in catering for future urban growth as outlined in the Local Plan, it is critical to ensure that proper plans are in place for the provision of Cultural facilities and services in this area in a coordinated and strategic manner and to utilise the projects being planned for Highfields as catalysts for the implementation of the broader vision identified for the Highfields Town Centre Precinct in the Local Plan.



01 INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this commission is to prepare the Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan (Draft Master Plan) for Highfields. The minimum area to be covered by the Draft Master Plan correlates with the Highfields Town Centre Precinct. There will be community facilities and services located outside the Highfields Town Centre Precinct and where appropriate, linkages or the plan area is to be extended to include these facilities and services.

To be successful, this Draft Master Plan will draw on the work completed to date (see Section 3.0 Baseline Studies), evaluate each of the existing community facilities and services in the Highfields area, identify recommended future facilities and services and identify the location for catalyst projects to support implementation of the vision of the Local Plan with respect to the Town Centre.

The Draft Master Plan is to consider the optimal location and linkages for community facilities and services and suggested urban design and built form considerations to achieve the vision outlined in the Local Plan. The Draft Master Plan will address location and integration opportunities between facilities and services to optimise the legibility of Highfields as the community grows.

The Draft Master Plan addresses the purpose outlined above with strong emphasis on:

- Community participation and utilisation of facilities;
- Town Centre legibility;
- Economic confidence to leverage private investment;
- Built Form predicated on strong Urban Design; and
- Highfields Placemaking opportunities.

The Draft Master plan considers the provision of community facilities and services (using population thresholds) in the evolution of Highfields. The draft Master Plan identifies integration strategies and optimal locations for community facilities and services noting the existing facilities already in place. The draft Master Plan considers appropriate linkages to ensure that future development in the study area contributes to the future vision for the Town Centre whilst serving the needs of the community.



- 1 HIGHFIELDS VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTRE
- 2 CULTURAL PRECINCT
- 3 HIGHFIELDS MCDONALDS
- 4 HIGHFIELDS TAVERN
- 5 CRAIG'S HOME HARDWARE
- 7 MARY MACKILLOP CATHOLIC SCHOOL
- 8 FOREST RESERVE
- 9 HIGHFIELDS STATE SECONDARY COLLEGE
- EXTENT OF STUDY

02 CONTEXT

STUDY AREA

Highfields is a rapidly growing residential township supporting the city of Toowoomba located approximately 14km to the north-east. Highfields is a 60+ha predominantly suburban community, with surrounding areas being largely rural in character with pockets of rural residential development, mainly to the south. Its town centre has been relatively recently established but is supported by a rapidly growing residential community.

The Draft Master Plan looks at a range of issues at the macro scale that inform urban strategies at the town core. The Draft Master Plan makes a more detailed study of an area that correlates with the Highfields Town Centre Precinct as indicated in the Local Plan.

HISTORY

Settlement of the area dates from the 1860s with land used mainly for pastoral purposes. Growth took place from the late 1800s into the early 1900s aided by the opening of the railway line from Murphy's Creek to Highfields (Spring Bluff) in 1867. From this point, timber production became an important industry. Highfields Shire was amalgamated with Crow's Nest Shire in March 1949, and was amalgamated into Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) in 2008. The population of the area has quadrupled after the 1990s until now.

Ref: HighFields, Merringandan and Merringandan West Local Plan Report, Deicke Richards, 2013



DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Ref: HighFields, Meringandan and Meringandan West Local Plan Report, Deicke Richards, 2013

There are a number of drivers of change affecting Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West and this LP. Some of the key drivers are as follows:

POPULATION GROWTH

According to projections by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research (OESR), the total population of the Toowoomba Region is expected to grow by approximately 79,839 people between 2011 and 2031. This equates to an annual average growth rate of 1.6% per annum. The estimated population growth within the Toowoomba Statistical District (TSD) is estimated at 66,084 people between 2011 and 2031.

Highfields has been identified as a key growth area along with Westbrook, Darling Heights, Drayton and Glenvale. These areas are expecting large population increases of over 10,000 people each over the next 20 years.

The 2011 Highfields population is 8350 people with 2282 people in Meringandan and Meringandan West. Given Highfields has been identified for an additional 10,000 people, the Local Plan aims to help determine how these people can be accommodated in a sustainable way.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

In addition to population growth, the 2012 Population and Dwelling Profile by OESR projects there will be a significant change in the demographics of the region over the next twenty years.

The proportion of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 13.5% in 2006 to 20.5% in 2031 and the median age will also increase by 4.5 years from 35.8 in 2006 to 40.3 years by 2031. The 25-44 year age group will remain the dominant age group - accounting for 24% of the total population, closely followed by the 45-64 year age group (23.5% of the total population).

This has implications for the provision, and type, of housing being planned and developed in Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West, and has implications for movement and transport.



HIGHFIELDS VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTRE



- 1 COMMUNITY CENTRE
- 2 AQUATIC CENTRE
- 3 GYM AND SPORTS FACILITY
- 4 CULTURAL CENTRE CARPARKING

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

HOUSING DIVERSITY & AFFORDABILITY

There is currently limited housing diversity in the Local Plan area. The low density residential and rural residential precincts that have evolved are characterised by 1000-4000m2 lots with high quality, large single storey dwellings.

The majority of residential land is zoned Low-Medium Density Residential (Regional Residential) or Low Density Residential. Whilst the Low-Medium Density Residential zoning allows for smaller, and possibly attached, dwelling types, Census information indicates 97.7% of the dwellings in Highfields are separate houses. This figure is even higher in Meringandan and Meringandan West.

The new planning scheme policy direction is to increase housing diversity, and there are infill opportunities to increase urban densities in some of the existing residential areas. Remaining greenfield sites, currently zoned Low-Medium Density Residential, also offer opportunities for future development to incorporate greater housing diversity and affordability.

The lack of housing choice within the Local Plan area impacts on affordability. The median sales prices of housing in the area is already significantly higher than those across the TRC area. Providing a more diverse range of dwelling types, including smaller lots, may reduce the cost of housing but also cater for the changing and ageing population.

INFRASTRUCTURE & COMPACT URBAN FORM

The provision of infrastructure directly impacts the Local Plan. One key issue is the provision of reticulated sewerage.

The existing sewerage infrastructure availability is limited within the Local Plan area and the lack of housing choice means the area does not make efficient use of the existing infrastructure. Currently only certain areas of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West are provided with sewer. These locations include the newer areas of these townships, including the Highfields Town Centre. The remaining development has individual on-site sewerage treatment systems.

The Priority Infrastructure Plan (PIP) seeks to provide coordinated infrastructure delivery to service the anticipated growth in the study area up until 2031.

Greater urban densities and a more compact urban form in currently underdeveloped areas will help improve the efficiency of the infrastructure. The majority of the community of Meringandan and Meringandan West will remain unsewered which will limit the increase of density within the areas. The Low-Medium Density Residential zone in Highfields north of the existing town centre however does have the capacity to support significant growth with smaller lot houses as this area will be serviced with reticulated sewer.



CULTURAL FACILITIES

Highfields is justifiably proud of its suite of sporting and cultural assets that cluster around Community Court. The history behind these buildings is distinguished by the commitment and tenacity of the facility proponents who, quite literally, materialised them out of very thin air. This is a precinct that needs to continue to grow in step with the community it supports and the Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan anticipates and plans for this growth to optimise the community dividend.

The existing cultural facilities include the Cultural Centre, the Indoor Sports and Aquatic Centre and the Highfields Library. It adjoins and is backdropped by the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve and together make a precinct that is rich with potential to grow into a fine collection of community buildings and supporting culturally focussed public realm.

Whilst the Cultural Precinct is clearly consolidating into a recognisable and useful part of the emerging Highfields Township, its relationship with the existing retail centre is tenuous. Strengthening this connection and closing the gap of inactivated carparks that separate these two places will be a key objective for the Draft Master Plan. Additionally developing techniques to unify the existing and new community buildings into a more cohesive campus of facilities would both strengthen their presence in the town and optimise the opportunities around shared amenity.

A NEW PLAN

There is little point establishing a vision for the Cultural Precinct without first considering the vision for the Town Centre of Highfields. Present plans are responding to some issues around Highfields’ growing pains but doing so without a frame of reference – without any real understanding of the future shape of Highfields. By establishing a New Plan we can scribe the important lines, the ‘good bones’ that the town can grow into over time. These lines will guide development decisions, infrastructure investment, open space and public realm projects and the town planning for the area. In addition the Draft Master Plan telegraphs to the development community what the preferred vision is for the aspirational future of the Highfields Township.

Strategies developed will respond to identified road infrastructure issues, public realm deficiencies, open space opportunities, building form, street typologies and the general realisation of the Local Plan aspirations.



03 BASELINE STUDIES

Baseline studies of available reports have been undertaken and base data and drawing information collated. A number of site visits have been undertaken and interviews and observations recorded. These studies provide the necessary reference material to inform the urban analysis and subsequent masterplanning.

RELEVANT WORK

Council has recently undertaken a range of reviews that potentially impact on future planning of the cultural precinct, as described below.

Given each of these projects and the educational facilities recently constructed and under construction in Highfields, and the role of Highfields in catering for future urban growth as outlined in the Local Plan, it is critical to ensure that proper plans are in place for the provision of cultural facilities and services in this area in a coordinated and strategic manner and to utilise the projects being planned for Highfields as catalysts for the implementation of the broader vision identified for the Highfields Town Centre Precinct in the Local Plan



LOCAL PLAN

Council has completed a review of the Local Plan for Highfields, which has been extended to also apply to the neighbouring areas of Meringandan and Meringandan West. The Local Plan was endorsed by Council on 17 June 2014 and incorporated into the planning scheme via planning scheme amendment No.8, which became operational on 29 July 2016.

REVIEW OF LIBRARY FACILITIES

Separate to this review, Council's Library and Cultural Services Branch has undertaken a review of library facilities in the Toowoomba Region and has identified the need for a library to be constructed in the Highfields area to replace the existing temporary facility. Council has called for the development of a single storey library building, with a footprint in the order of 1,250m². This Draft Master Plan will inform both the optimal location and built form to activate some of the visions identified in the Local Plan.

REVIEW OF AQUATIC FACILITIES

Council's Community Development and Facilities Branch have also recently undertaken a regional review of its aquatic facilities, including for those at Highfields, which has highlighted the need for upgrades to the existing aquatic facilities in Highfields to provide for year round utilisation.

HIGHFIELDS URBAN DESIGN REVIEW - OCTOBER 2014

Archipelago completed a review of the Highfields Town Centre in response to the need for urban design guidance for strategic infrastructure works. This high level review pointed to the need for a more robust grid of interconnected streets to resolve perceived traffic pressure and deliver a better structured town centre. It made proposals that have been directly referenced in this Draft Master Plan.



ONE OF MANY NO THROUGH ROADS IN HIGHFIELDS



ONE OF MANY NO THROUGH ROADS IN HIGHFIELDS

URBAN ANALYSIS

A detailed review of the base material and observations made on site allow for a critical study of the urban fabric of the existing Highfields Centre. What is clear from this study is that there are some aspects of the urban structure of Highfields that represent a significant liability to future growth, successful functioning and its overall success as a town. The Draft Master Plan attempts to respond to these identified issues and direct the strategic responses into a cohesive plan for the town moving forward.

EXISTING FABRIC - DISCONNECTED

Highfields appears at first glance to have a well surveyed street structure with a widely spaced frame of connected roads. Within this frame though are many rural residential streets with large sites containing single detached dwellings accessed by an elaborate pattern of bespoke cul-de-sacs. The resulting pattern of settlement is large parcels of land with distant or widely spaced connections making an overall impermeable urban fabric. This may have proven an attractive pattern of settlement when Highfields was merely a small collection of rural residential homesteads but as the area continues to rapidly grow, its community develops and its centre become more urban, the disconnected pattern of streets creates negative effects.

Some of those effects are practical in nature. For example; the lack of permeability reduces mode choice (car, bike, or walk) and route choice (only one way to go in any direction) when making local trips. Because the bespoke cul-de-sacs mean that local trips are unnecessarily convoluted and perceived

as distant, pedestrian and bike options are not possible. This creates an unnecessary reliance on the private car to service local trips and a focussing of traffic into the small number of connected roads creating unnecessary pressure on expensive road infrastructure.

Improving, wherever possible, the amount of connectedness in the patterns of streets makes for a more robust and sustainable pattern of settlement with improved performance of road infrastructure.

Other effects of disconnected streets are likely, and are worth further consideration. These would include impacts on social cohesion, safety, legibility, flexibility in land use, development redundancy, and other effects.





CHARLES & MOTEE ROGERS

The Charles and Motee Rogers bushland reserve is a dearly loved preserve of native forest. Its role in the town centre needs to be carefully considered to ensure it is an important participant in any plan for the centre’s future. Recent conflicts with town growth and preserving the bushland is an indicator that a long term plan for the meaningful adaptive use of this reserve is not currently integrated well into a planned future for the town centre.

- Some issues for consideration might include;
- How to improve access to/through and safe enjoyment of the reserve
 - How to increase the interface between neighbouring built form and the reserve to create a valued outlook
 - How to physically grow the extent of the reserve
 - How to ensure the reserve does not act to isolate parts of the town (for example the new school from the town centre)

Highfields enjoys a number of framing green spaces that are important element of the town’s fabric. The town centre Draft Master Plan should respond to reinforce their role in the town by creating meaningful connections with this open space resource. Other towns such as Kuranda in Queensland’s north have created a distinctive sense of place and economic offer through the preservation and enhancement of forest reserves integrated into town centres.



REMNANT BUSH LAND ON O’BRIEN ROAD

NARROW STREETS

Highfields has many streets with 20m road reserves. Creative urban design and landscaping solutions need to be brought to this problem where improved performance in the street is required. Road widening will be inevitably contentious – if this is done badly then the tree lined streets of Highfields today will be lost to wide roads dedicated to cars.

Demonstration of urban designs that utilise existing infrastructure more efficiently whilst improving public realm and vehicular performance should be supported through future local planning in collaboration with a developed infrastructure plan.



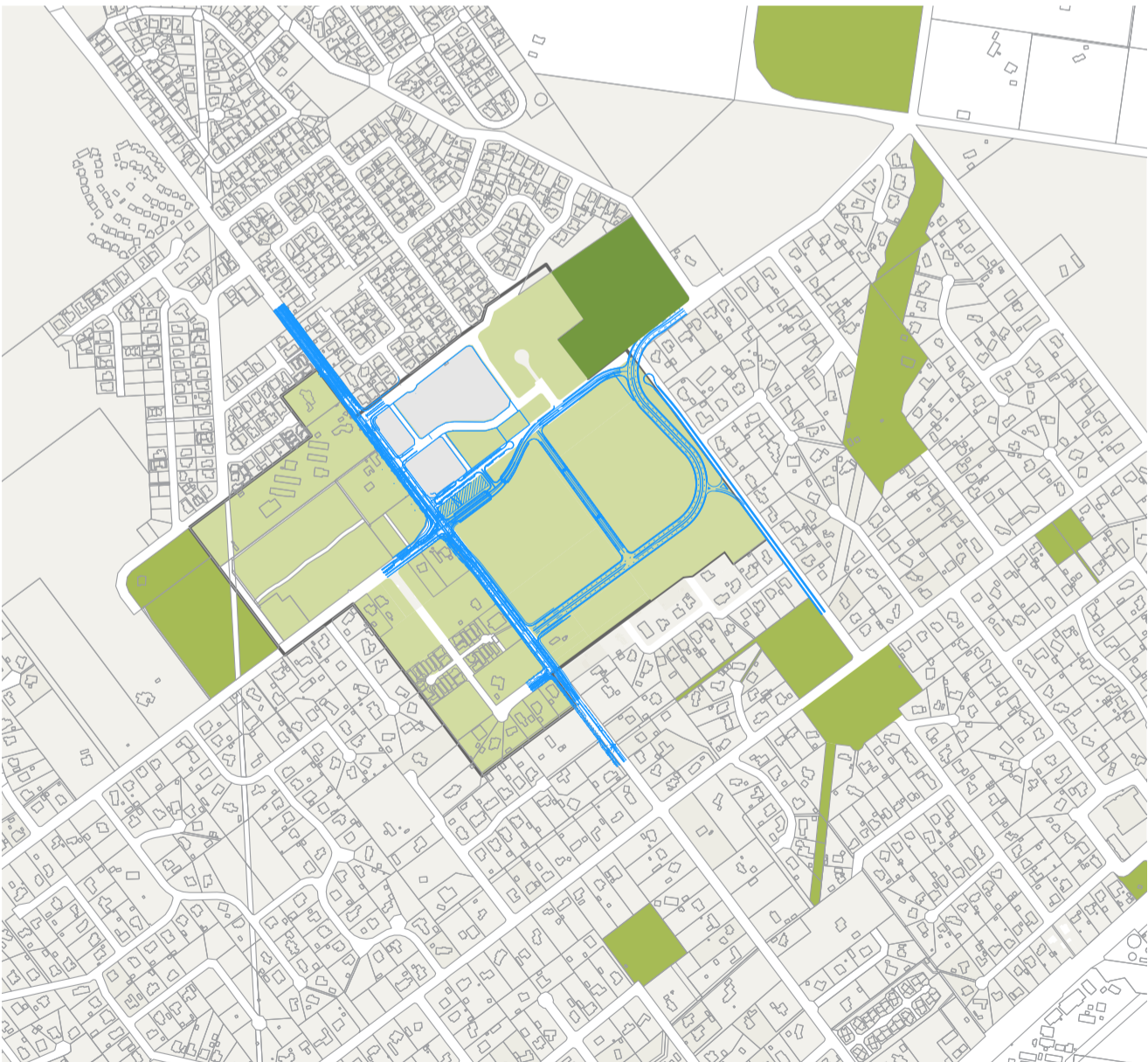


FAILING INTERSECTION FORCING HEAVY HANDED SOLUTIONS



INTERSECTION BETWEEN HIGHFIELDS ROAD, KRATZKE ROAD AND O'BRIEN ROAD

KEY INTERSECTION



AVOIDING A HEAVY HANDED INFRASTRUCTURE

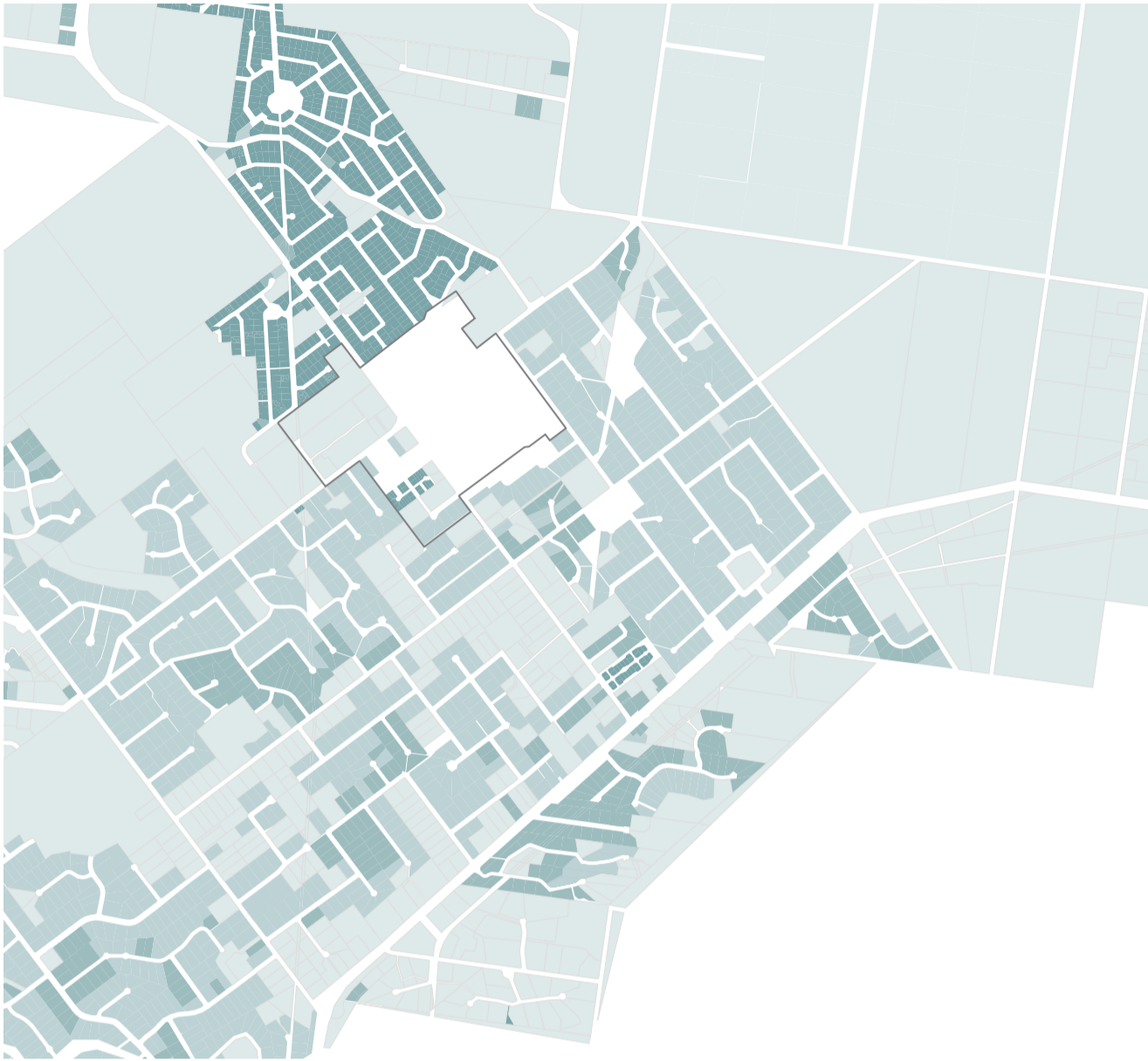
The lack of a well-connected town frame for the Highfields Centre runs the risk of creating aberrations in traffic that attract reactive, heavy handed road solutions that are expensive, have large footprints and negatively impact on Highfields quality of place. To avoid this, more connected streets that deliver real permeability through an interconnected grid are needed to improve the ability to distribute traffic rather than concentrate it.

At a more strategic level, local planning needs to encourage a place for people, over a car oriented centre, by placing controls on car oriented land use and built form and managing planning tools to deliver an improved network of interconnected streets. There are many examples of the kinds of infrastructure that are delivered in car oriented towns that have limited sustainability, impact livability and bias the delivery of community infrastructure to merely more roads.

Improved traffic distribution combined with a sensible approach to sustainable street design will ensure Highfields maintains its high quality sense of place moving forward.

PROPOSED SOLUTION OCTOBER 2014

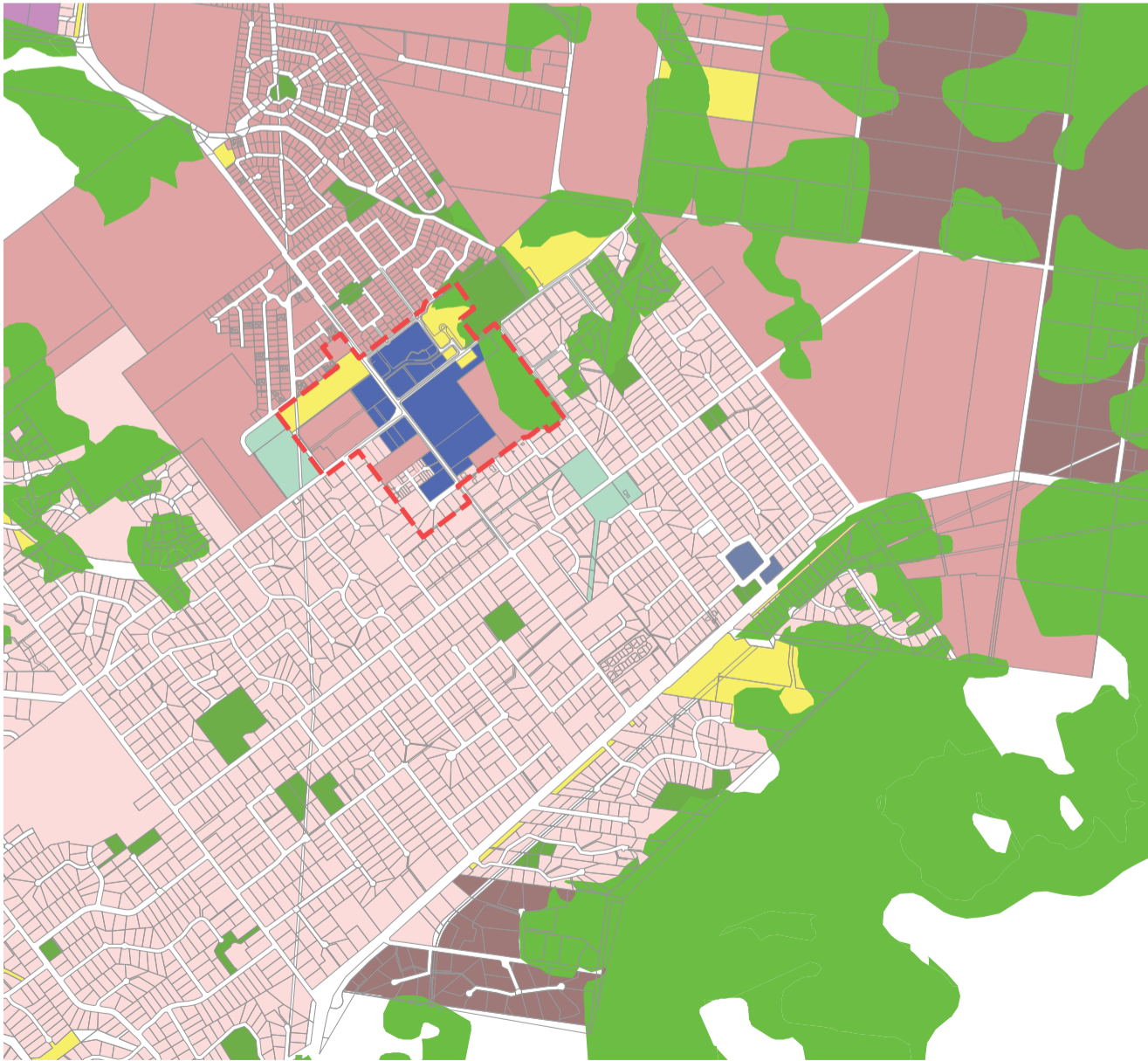
INTERSECTION PROPOSAL BETWEEN HIGHFIELDS ROAD, KRATZKE ROAD AND O'BRIEN ROAD. OCTOBER 2014



LAND SIZES

Highfields has a legacy of large land parcels born out of its pastoral past. The success of the future town centre will depend in part on the delivery of a finer grained fabric of land uses in concert with a well developed street network. Typical urban block sizes in many urban centres have a maximum block dimension of 200m x 100m. Within good functioning centres, laneways, cross block linkages and pedestrian/cycling throughways are used to deliver a further level of permeability. Having many choices of ways to move through the grain of a town can improve its success as a centre. Additional public streets will be required to properly structure the town centre.

- > 1500m²
- 1500m² - 2500m²
- 2500M² - 3500M²
- 3500m² +



- LAND USE PLAN**
- MAJOR CENTRE
 - DISTRICT CENTRE
 - RESIDENTIAL CHOICE
 - RESIDENTIAL LIVING
 - RURAL RESIDENTIAL
 - GREEN/ OPEN SPACE SPACE + BIODIVERSITY
 - SPORTS AND RECREATION
 - COMMUNITY
 - INDUSTRY
 - SITE

LAND USE

There is an established Land Use Plan in the current Local Plan which has been refined in the Local Plan Report, 2013. The Draft Master Plan will consider land use in detail and make recommendations for a further consideration of the pattern of land uses and staging strategies.

ENDORSED LOCAL PLAN

The endorsed local plan makes aspirations around land use that may not have considered a purposeful structure for the town centre in detail and should be considered a guiding aspiration. A more detailed local area plan covering the town centre should be considered informed by a broadly endorsed Draft Master Plan.

USE FRAMED AROUND STREETS

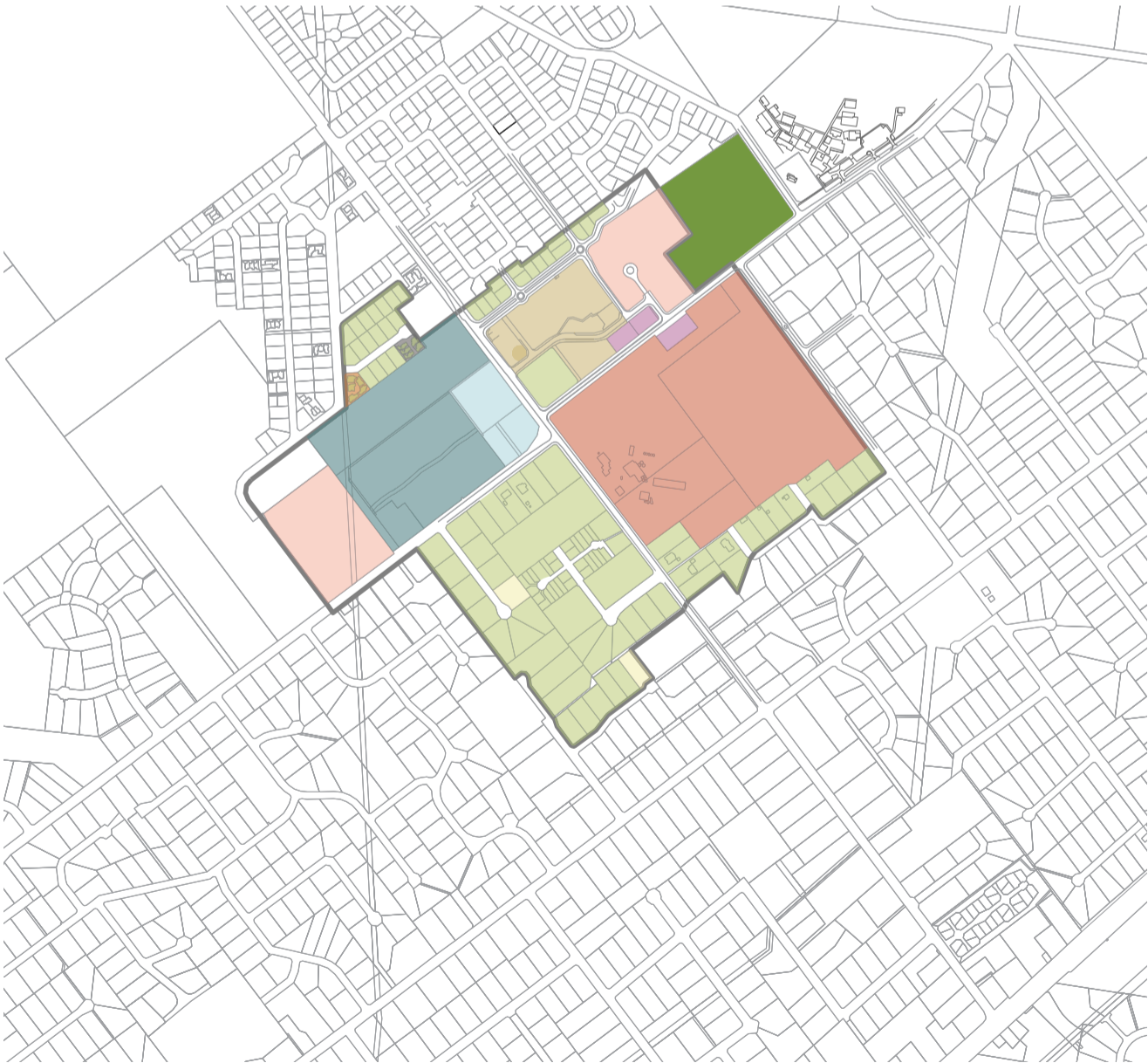
Like uses should be framed around streets to encourage legibility and identity. Streets of like uses will foster a common address and avoid inappropriate conflicts in pattern of use. This is an important consideration at use boundaries.

PROPOSITION FOR USE STRUCTURE

The Draft Master Plan should make propositions around a structure of uses that encourages the aspirational structure of the Draft Master Plan. Organising uses to reinforce a Main Street is an example. More intense uses may cluster around important intersections or centres of activity. Coalescing uses may assist in strengthening precincts, improving legibility and way finding. The pattern of uses may be in response to inherent qualities of the site; topography is an example.

TENURE MAP

- CHARLES & MOTEE ROGERS BUSHLAND RESERVE
- PROPERTY OWNER 1
- PROPERTY OWNER 2
- PROPERTY OWNER 3
- PROPERTY OWNER 4
- PROPERTY OWNER 5
- PROPERTY OWNER 6
- PROPERTY OWNER 7
- VARIOUS PROPERTY OWNERS
- COUNCIL OWNED
- STATE OWNED





BUILT FORM

Highfields has a young built form of predominantly detached single level houses on large blocks. The town centre has been very recently established and delivers a typical suburban retail model of one or two ‘big box’ anchors supported by single sided retail specialty stores with generous at grade carparking at its front. Many other uses in the town centre set back generously from any street frontage behind large carparking areas. Many of the streets have little or no footpath or street furniture.

Whilst the centre is well patronised and functions well there is little in the way of any real civic amenity or pedestrian focussed public realm. Built form will, in concert with public realm, shape the experience of the town.



DENSITY INCREASE

Highfields remains one of the fastest growing centres in Australia and with that growth comes the liabilities associated with sprawl. Spread-out housing means spread out infrastructure (roads, sewerage, drainage, energy, communications). In addition, there is an increasing dependency of cars which further burdens the household. Already there are bell wethers for increased density with some rural residential block near the town centre subdividing down to small lot housing or attached dwellings.

of all infrastructure and increases the possibility of a successful activated commercial centre. Supporting density will improve the chances of a vital and active Main Street.

The Draft Master Plan should consider opportunities for exemplar medium density mixed use development of 2 – 4 storeys around the town centre and consider the support of a catalyst project to telegraph best practice standards to the development community.

Increasing density around the town centre is a good thing to encourage. It optimises the viability



SETBACK AND INTERFACES

For the successful establishment of a town centre the built form address must mature from the current examples. Present buildings are generously setback, often behind large reservoirs of at-grade carparking. The relationship between the built form and the public realm is a tenuous one and in some instances buildings are completely ignorant of their responsibility to meaningfully address streets.

scale of the buildings to street is also important. A building height of one half the street width should be the minimum acceptable built form.

Carparking solutions should be provided behind the activated frontage and where ever possible be sleeved to the street by built form.

The Draft Master Plan will make clear directives for the address and setback for built form with built to boundary required on all major commercial streets and modest setbacks to secondary town streets. The



CAR ORIENTATED BOX RETAIL

It is easy to understand the relationship between the car and convenience and the success of some businesses. A challenge for many growing centres around Australia is managing the impact of car oriented retail services. The force of the perceived need to deliver the singular model of a big box in a sea of carparks as the only model for successful retail can create momentum around development and car dependency which is self fulfilling. The more car oriented amenity delivered in the town, the more one needs to use a car to access the amenity, the only evidence of ‘what works’ is the incumbent pattern of use of car oriented retail.

Ironically, many of the town centres that we enjoy, that have purposeful, functioning main streets were established before the Second World War (the time commonly attributed to popularising of the car) where public transport, cycling and walking were more common modes of travel.

A challenge to Highfields moving forward will be to deliver more sophisticated built form that responds to the types of streets and spaces we desire whilst managing to provide access to parking and movement to ensure commercial success. Townships like Maleny in Queensland’s south and Dalesford in country Victoria have wrestled with new development and parking whilst ensuring built form outcomes that support an enviable main street.



EXISTING CULTURAL PRECINCT

CONSULTATION

ACTIVITIES TO DATE

Understanding the aspirations and needs of Highfields current and future community is a critical part of the master planning process for the Highfields Cultural Precinct.

Toowoomba Regional Council, together with the consultant team, have designed a program of engagement activities which seek to ensure the local residents, business, community and sporting organisations all have an opportunity to share their perspectives on the master plan for the cultural precinct, and the town centre more broadly. This will ensure the master plan understands and responds to community expectations as well as ensuring existing and any new facilities and services meet future demand, and can managed and operated effectively.

The consultation and engagement program is in its early stages, and over the coming months the following stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide detailed feedback on the Master Plan through a targeted program of local consultation activities, as well as online through Council's website.

Targeted Stakeholders include:

TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL

- Executive Management Team
- Highfields Cultural Precinct Master Plan Steering Group
- Urban Design and Placemaking Panel
- Highfields Cultural Precinct Master Plan Community Reference Group
- Local Councillor, Cr. Bill Cahill

LOCAL VENUES AND USERS

- Highfields Library
- Highfields Fitness and Recreation Centre (including pool)
- Highfields Cultural Centre
- Council's Customer Service Centre
- Highfields Shopping Centre
- SES/Fire and Rescue
- Regular users, hirers and clubs located within these facilities

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- Local bushcare groups (Charles and Motee Rogers Bushland Reserve)
- RSL Highfields Sub Branch Inc
- Highfields and District Business Connections
- Highfields State School
- Mary MacKillop Catholic College Highfields
- Highfields State Secondary College

RESIDENTS, TOURISTS, VISITORS AND OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- Local residents, workers and businesses
- Landholders
- Visitors and tourists
- Audiences and tourists

PROCESS	TIMING	ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM
Understand: Opportunity Assessment	February – April 2015	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Newsletter• Targeted discussions with stakeholders• Identification of key issues and opportunities
Develop: Draft Master Plan	April – May 2015	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Testing and refinement of draft master plan• Targeted discussions with stakeholders
Community Consultation	18 April – 19 May 2017	To be completed <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Consultation including targeted stakeholder discussions, community information sessions and displays in Highfields, online information and feedback through Council’s website, call for public submissions• Review of feedback and submissions by Council and the project consultants
Finalise: Master Plan	From June 2017	Master Plan is considered and endorsed by Council

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS HAVE SAID SO FAR?

- The following is a summary of feedback from the targeted discussions undertaken to inform the development of the draft master plan.

HIGHFIELDS IS A DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT TOWN TO TOOWOOMBA

- Highfields town centre and the community is busiest outside school and work hours - in the early mornings and late afternoons;
- Highfields is known as a ‘very safe community’, and continues to have a low crime rate;
- The delivery of the new shopping centre and retail opportunities stimulated the growth of the Highfields community.

THE HIGHFIELDS CULTURAL PRECINCT NEEDS:

- A new, accessible, contemporary library with increased operating hours;
- To upgrade existing pool facility for all year round use;
- An upgraded, expanded or new cultural facility to meet high demand;
- More street level activity to improve the connection between the shopping centre and the existing facilities within the Highfields’ Cultural Precinct;
- Improve access and use of the skate park so it can seen as a safe place for children and young people;
- Improve access and safe connections between the schools, bushlands, shopping centre and cultural and sporting facilities;
- Enhanced public transport, cycle and pedestrian connections throughout Highfields;
- Embrace the local bushland setting and support conservation of this local resource;
- Create local employment opportunities for local residents;
- Engage with key landholders in the town centre, and gain their support for the master plan;
- Ensure Council maintains its commitment to delivering the new library as well as the master plan;
- Facilitate opportunities for a joint public and private ventures; and
- Provide a choice of entertainment and recreational opportunities for local young people.

SUMMARY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following is a summary of the urban issues that inform the Draft Master Plan strategies;

URBAN ANALYSIS



SKATE PARK - PART OF CULTURAL PRECINCT

Issue:	Disconnected pattern of streets with limited permeability and the start of traffic congestion.
Strategy	Provide additional connections to deliver a finer grain urban frame, improve permeability and distribute traffic.
Issue:	Reactive solutions to solving perceived traffic problems seem heavy handed and expensive.
Strategy	Redirect road investment into smaller, carefully considered new connections and street scape upgrades to create a more connected grid of great streets.
Issue:	The Charles & Motee Rogers Reserve in not integrated well into a vision for the town centre’s public realm or open space strategy.
Strategy	The Charles & Motee Rogers Reserve in not integrated well into a vision for the town centre’s public realm or open space strategy.
Issue:	Highfields has narrow streets that cannot become big roads.
Strategy	Develop designs that can deliver the maximum flexibility for accommodating traffic peaks whilst maintaining a good standard of public realm. Deliver an interconnected grid to distribute traffic.



PUBLIC PARK

LAND USE

Issue:	Existing large parcels of land with too few streets connecting through and around them.
Strategy:	Deliver a new grid great streets to provide a fine grain fabric of development parcels where possible build on existing streets patterns to stitch the centre into its context.
Issue:	Current Land Use Plan does not consider a detailed plan for the centre.
Strategy:	Review the landuse plan in the context of a broadly supported new masterplan for the town centre.
Issue:	Land Use using important street as boundaries to uses.
Strategy:	Designate common uses around streets with a common address and intended function. Separate uses midblock.



PEDESTRIAN FOOTPATH - HIGHFIELDS ROAD

BUILT FORM

Issue:	Big Box retail and suburban retail centre carparking strategies will create a car oriented centre
Strategy:	Deliver a masterplan that balances the need for visible easy carparking with good built form and streetscape outcomes to ensure the primary places made in the town form a high quality public realm for people
Issue:	Many of the areas around the town centre are very low density and generally Highfields is sprawling to grow
Strategy:	Create use zonings to encourage density in and around the centre and build catalyst projects to telegraph to the development community best practice.
Issue:	Current buildings in the centre have poor address the centre streets often setback behind extensive car parking
Strategy:	Build strongly to the boundary on major streets, enforce activation and address to the street as a desired outcome



4.0 VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The following sections details the vision for the town centre and explains the primary strategies that inform the Draft Master Plan.

VISION

The proposed Highfields Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan supports and builds on the vision for Highfields and Meringandan as stated in the Local Plan Report, 2013;

“Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West have a unique character and identity showcasing the natural beauty of bushland and gardens against a rural backdrop. These areas will continue to grow into a well connected town. A series of local neighbourhoods will support a strong civic heart with facilities and services well utilised and enjoyed by the community. The combination of the qualities makes Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West attractive to visitors and community members alike.”

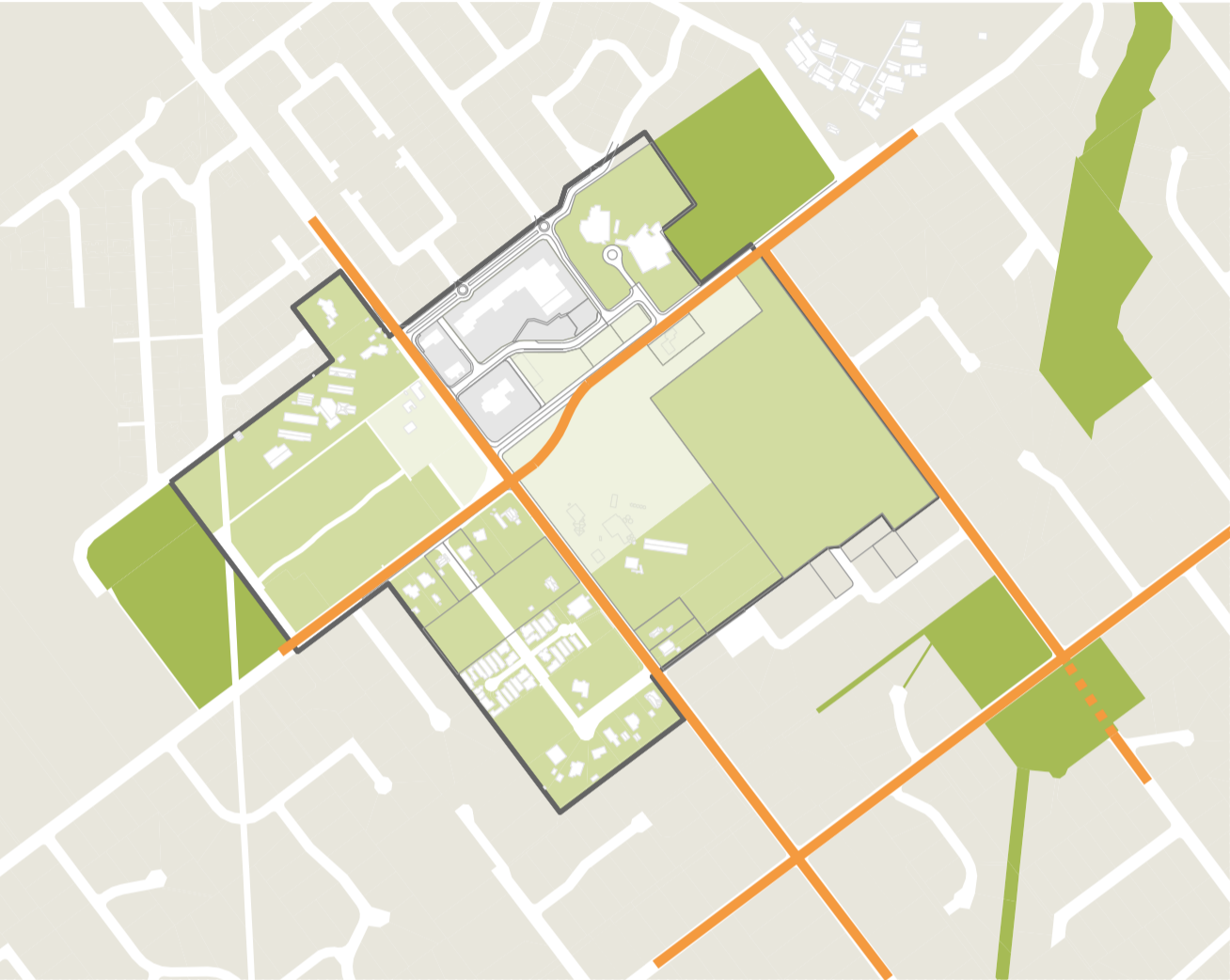
Interpreting key elements from this vision in addition to the feedback from the simple stakeholder engagement undertaken to date a modified vision could be stated that better underpins the aspirations for the Town Centre and Cultural Precinct and connects those aspirations with the physical strategies deployed in the Draft Master Plan.

The following is offered;

“Highfields is a town that blends the natural beauty of bushland with a growing active urban centre to create a distinctive experience of the ‘rural urban’. The Town Centre provides an attractive alternative for a place of business, a landmark on the regions tourism map and a strong and loved civic heart for the surrounding communities. Highfields town is famous for its great streets and big gums, good coffee and bustling markets, interesting shopping and burgeoning businesses, attractive festivals and cultural events. “

MASTERPLAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

The Draft Master Plan deploys a series of primary strategies in response to the summary issues. These strategies structure the Draft Master Plan and are conceived as direct design responses to the major issues identified in the research and consultation to date.



NEW STRONG STRUCTURE FOR TOWN FRAME

Critical to the future of Highfields as a functioning centre is the establishment of a robust pattern of streets to define the Town frame. Extend Clarke Road to the New England Highway by adding two small additional connections and provide improvements to the streetscape and amenity. The improved Clarke Road will compliment Highfields Road and allow for traffic to distribute through an alternate route from the town centre. Highfields, O’Brien and Clarke form a strong structure capturing the major green field redevelopment sites and providing a frame for the town to grow into.



NEW O'BRIEN ROAD

Solving the O’Brien/Highfields Road intersection is important for the future functioning of the town’s primary streets. By realigning the portion of O’Brien Road up to Clarke Road a simple four way intersection can be established with Highfields Road solving the identified traffic issues.



THE SECONDARY CONNECTING STREETS

The secondary connection streets complete the hierarchy and connect through the Highfields town centre. These connection allowing safe cycling and pedestrian connections into the suburbs.



ROBUST GRID OF 'CITY' STREETS

Establish a robust grid of city streets. This grid should be organised logically with the town frame delivering appropriately sized city blocks (roughly 200m x100m is common) with a fine grain of interconnected streets. Wherever possible existing streets should be extended into the town frame with as many strong connections made as possible. The town grid should lend itself easily to the establishment of a street hierarchy. The town grid should be robust – it will form the 'bones' for the town to grow into over time.



CONNECTIVE TISSUE

Over time improving existing street connections or providing new street connections increases the interconnectivity of street network in and around the town centre effectively ‘stitching’ the town centre into its context. Small, carefully considered additions provide the ‘connective tissue’ to make a more cohesive fabric of streets with the town centre and its adjoining context. Increased interconnectivity reduces road congestion by better distributing traffic and improves pedestrian and cycling amenity on existing and new streets. This leads to improved property values and better economic performance.



MOMENTS OF ARRIVAL

New O’Brien Road makes two places where significant intersections occur to streets that connect directly to the New England Highway. These are the places which can be enhanced to mark the moment of arrival or the point of departure from the town centre. Whilst not definitive, having these places enhanced to heighten the experience of arriving adds to the identity and legibility of the centre.



MAIN STREET AND FRAMING

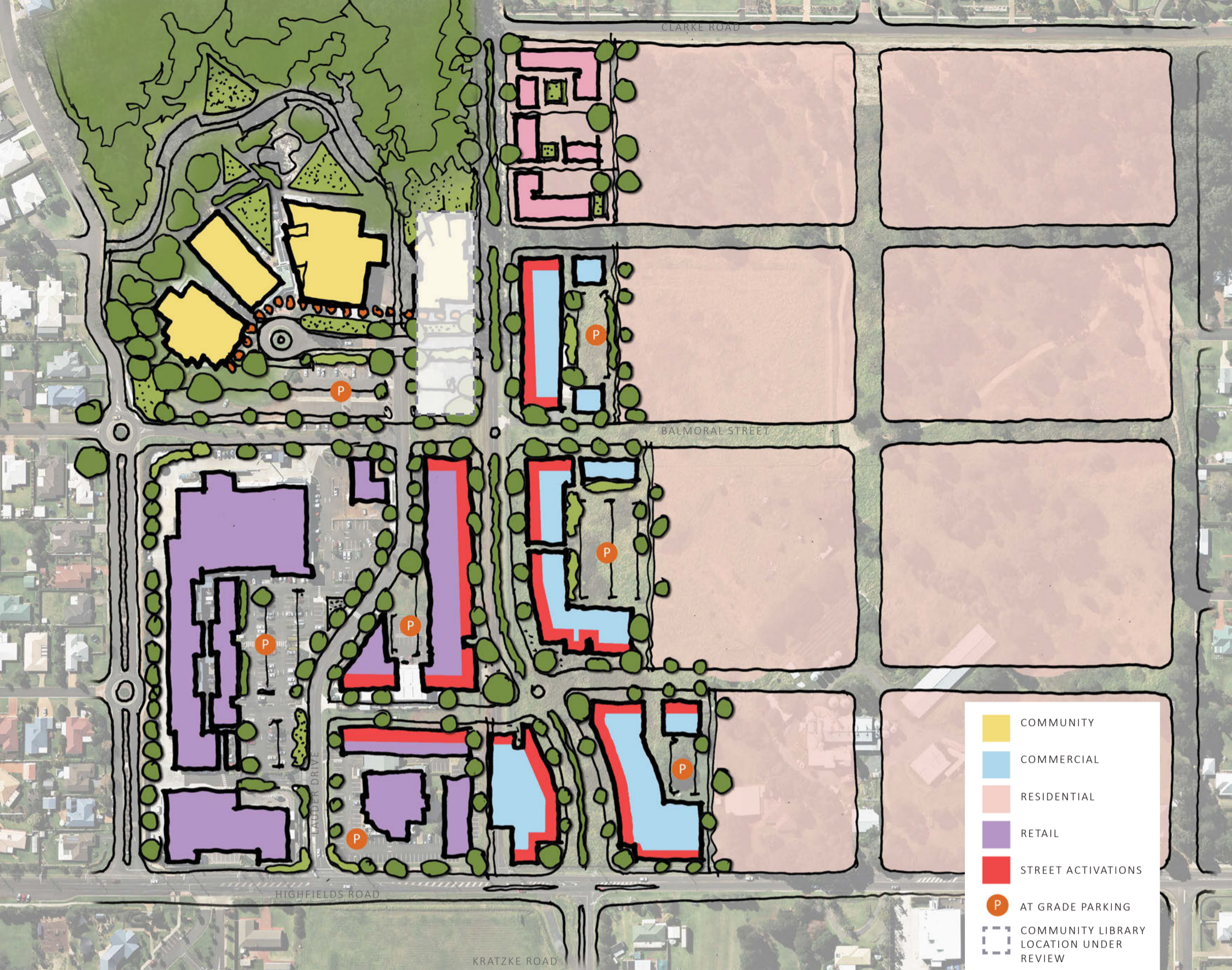
Where the connection streets cross O’Brien Road they create important places in the master plan. The built form is pulled back to create a square. They are key in the pedestrian connection.



EXTENDED CANOPY

The Charles & Motee Rogers Reserve is a dearly loved preserve of bushland that has been identified for its ecological value to the region. The Draft Master Plan proposes a town-wide landscape strategy to grow the effective canopy of the reserve into the town proper through a series of interconnected green spaces provided within the streets and within development parcels. This network of green will, over time, integrate the experience of the bush landscape into the town fabric creating a distinctive and emblematic quality to the town’s urban fabric differentiating Highfields offer as a place to live, to visit and to do business.

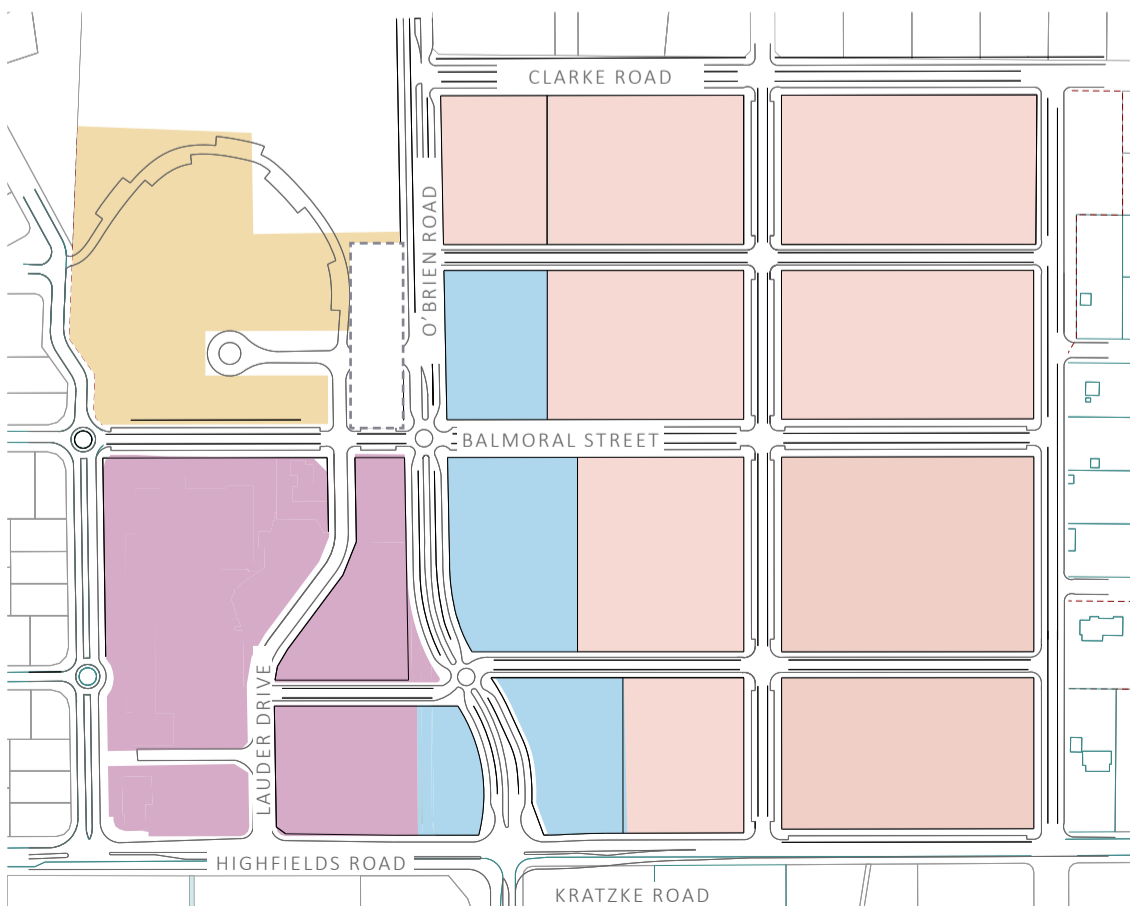




SCALE 1:2500 @ A3

SKETCH MASTERPLAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

Preliminary sketch masterplans prepared to demonstrate the application of the master plan design strategies. It shows the impact of the alterations of O'Brien Road to align with Kratzke Road.



LAND USE OPTIONS

The role of the Draft Master Plan is to deliver a robust framework for the city to grow into over time. These diagrams demonstrate alternatives for the distribution of land uses. The successful land use may be affected by market cycles, staging constraints, infrastructure expansion and many other development forces.

SCALE 1:5000 @ A3

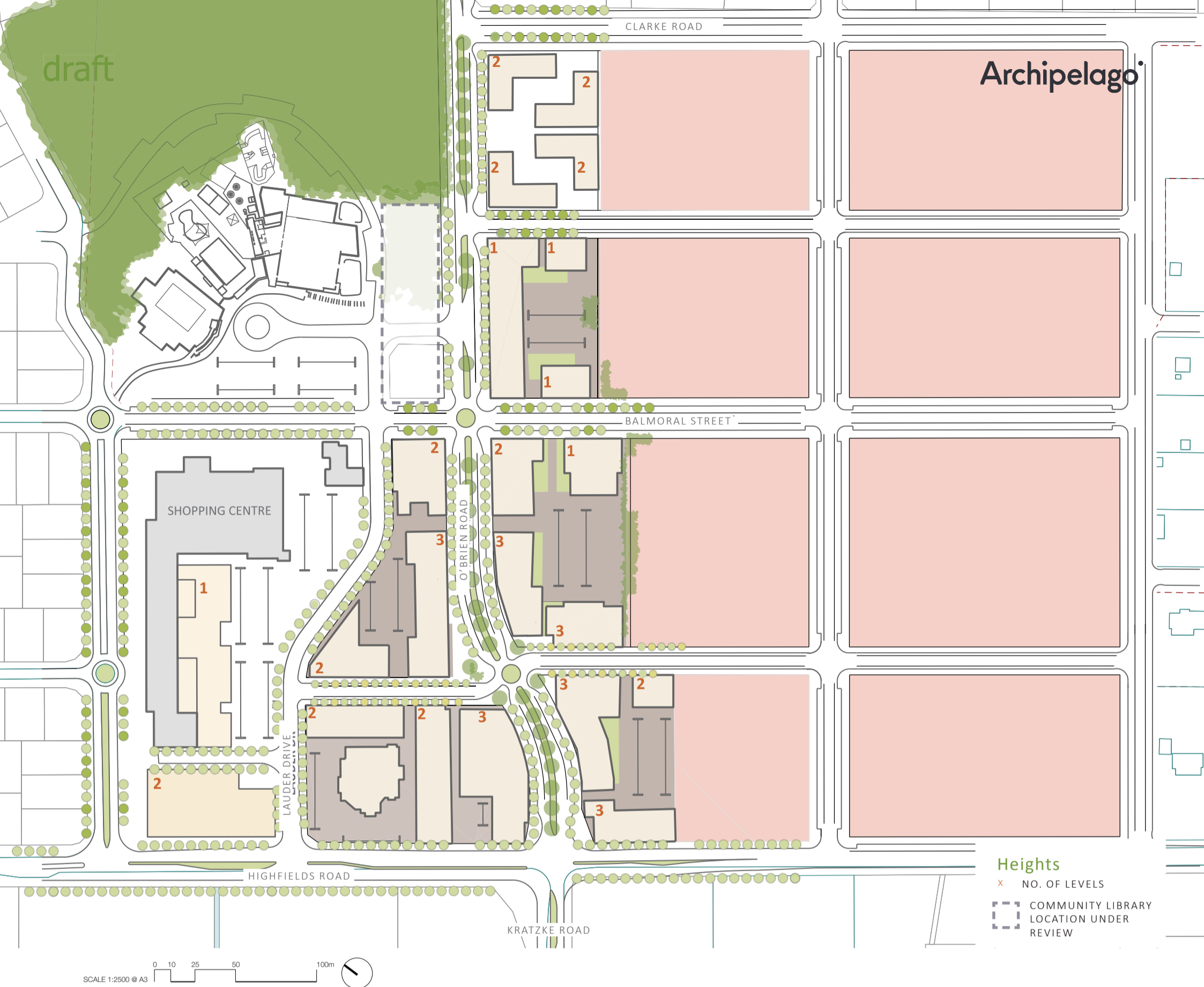
COMMUNITY

COMMERCIAL

RESIDENTIAL

RETAIL

COMMUNITY LIBRARY LOCATION UNDER REVIEW

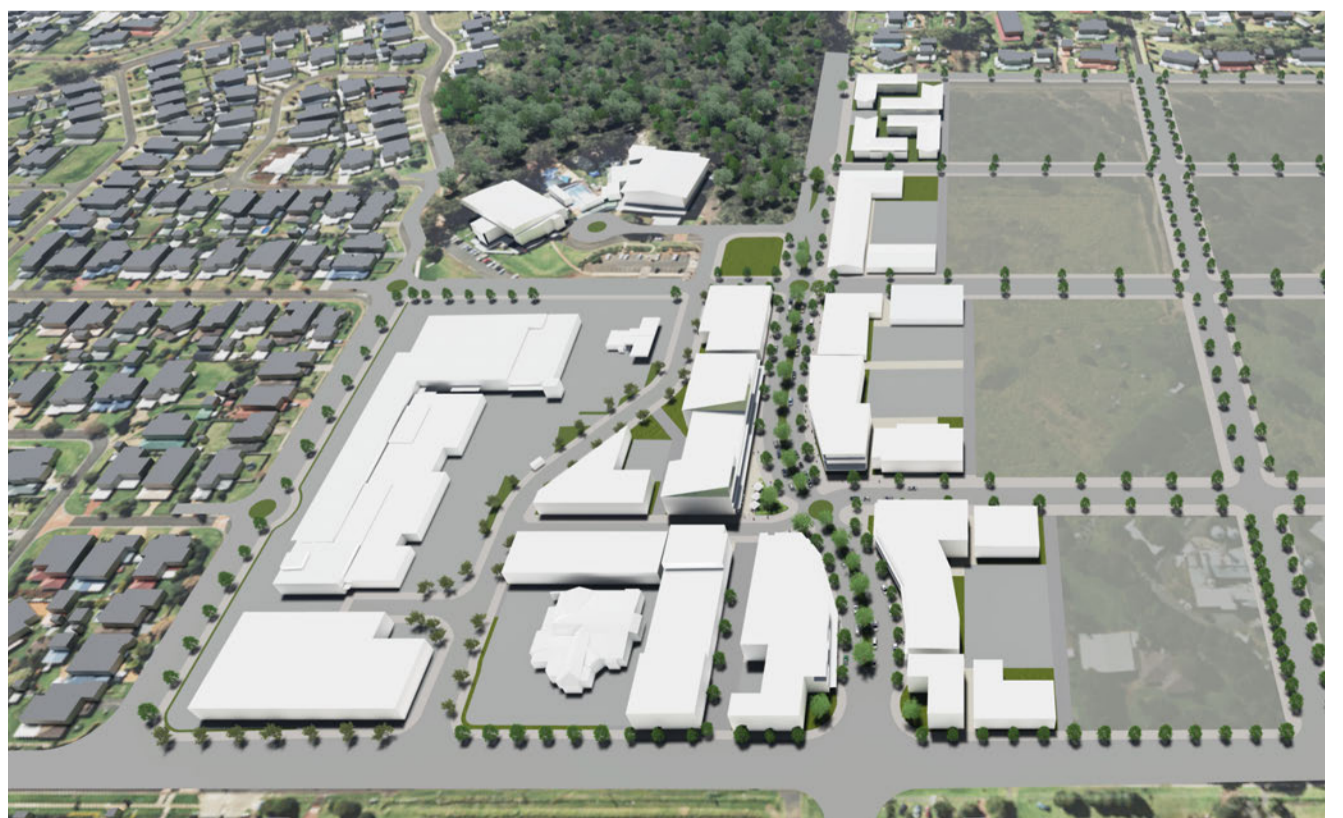


5.0 URBAN FRAMEWORK

DETAILED URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The Urban Framework demonstrates the applications of the urban design strategies in a diagrammatic Draft Master Plan. Each strategy is deployed and mapped and it's the collection and integration of these strategies that creates the Draft Master Plan response.

This provides the framework for decisions around discrete elements, the street hierarchy, modes of movement, land parcels, land use, etc.



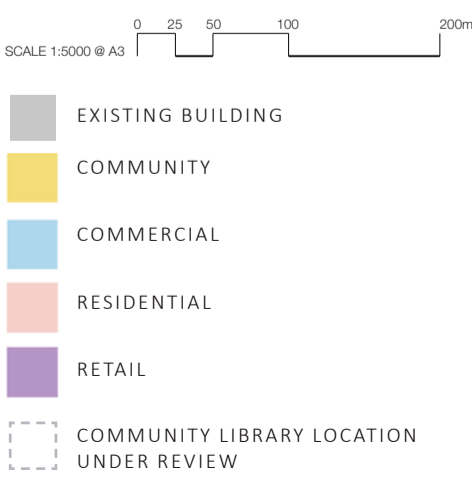
draft



CITY SQUARE



O'BRIEN ROAD KEY ARRIVAL FROM HIGHFIELDS ROAD



FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS



Key Arrival



These are the places which can be enhanced to mark the moment of arrival or the point of departure from the town centre. Whilst not definitive, having these places enhanced to heighten the experience of arriving adds to the identity and legibility of the centre.



New O’Brien Avenue



This is an important street or boulevard that forms part of the town centre frame providing structure access into and around the centre. Where possible these streets will accommodate dedicated cycling amenity and strong streetscaping.



Vehicle Secondary



These streets provide the body of the centre, low speed, plentiful parking, less formal. The streets have activated shop fronts or commercial addresses with buildings oriented to the street with strong address. They have high quality, generous streetscaping, with places to dwell and linger and engage in the community.



Pedestrians Secondary



Less active pedestrian routes but still with a high quality amenity. Demands on footpaths will not be as great, streetscaping may be less formal and buildings may setback. Secondary pedestrian routes provide our way of getting around the centre rather than through the centre.



Cycle



Dedicated cycling amenity is provided within the streets. Centre cycling links connect into community infrastructure.



Active Edge - Primary



Primary active edge is activated visually and physically by retail or commercial uses with transparent shopfronts and a high frequency of entrances and access points. Uses may include occupation of the footpath and will provide continuous awnings to the street. Primary active edges have street parking and continuous built form to the is built to boundary.



Green Canopy



Within the town informal copses of bushland species extends into the town the canopy of eucalypts prevalent in the C&M R Reserve effectively growing the bushland into the town fabric.



Existing Buildings



Potential Development - Commercial





Parking



Parking is provided within the streets where possible and integrated into the streetscape strategy. At grade dedicated parking is provided behind sleeving built form and does not dominate the public realm. Carparking can be well landscaped incorporating WSUD.



Laneway and Cross Block Access

A crossblock linkage primarily for pedestrians but may incorporate vehicular links as well. Small lanes, well design carparking links, landscapes green spaces can perform this function. Cross blocks links should be provided at no more than 100m centres.



Pedestrian Primary

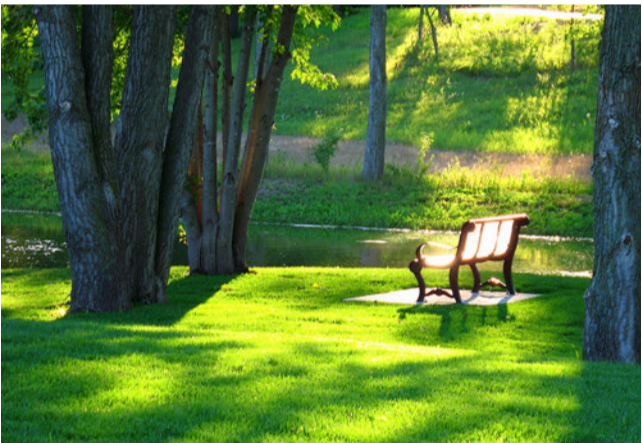
Centre framing streets also provide the primary pedestrian thoroughfares. Street would focus on the pedestrian amenity with wider footpaths and more generous landscape. Routes are active wherever possible, safe, shaded, and beautiful to encourage the culture of walking. Main Street is an obvious primary pedestrian route.



Active Edge Secondary



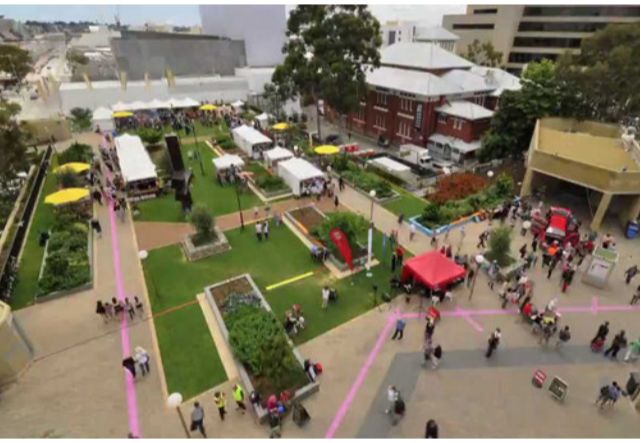
Secondary active edges are activated at least visually but may have less frequent access points. A continuous awning is not required and buildings may modestly setback from the street.



Green



Landscape reserves that provide passive green space within the town. These areas contribute to the network of urban canopy. These areas may perform functions to do with WSUD and accommodate passive recreation.



Active Place



An urban place that accommodate a significant place of urban activity. Markets, parades, protests, ceremonies may all be elements of this place. It may form the significant, memorable civic place within the town, effectively the town heart or town square.



Potential Development - Residential



Potential Development Community/Cultural

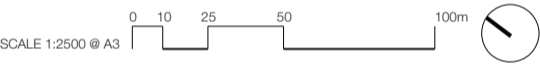
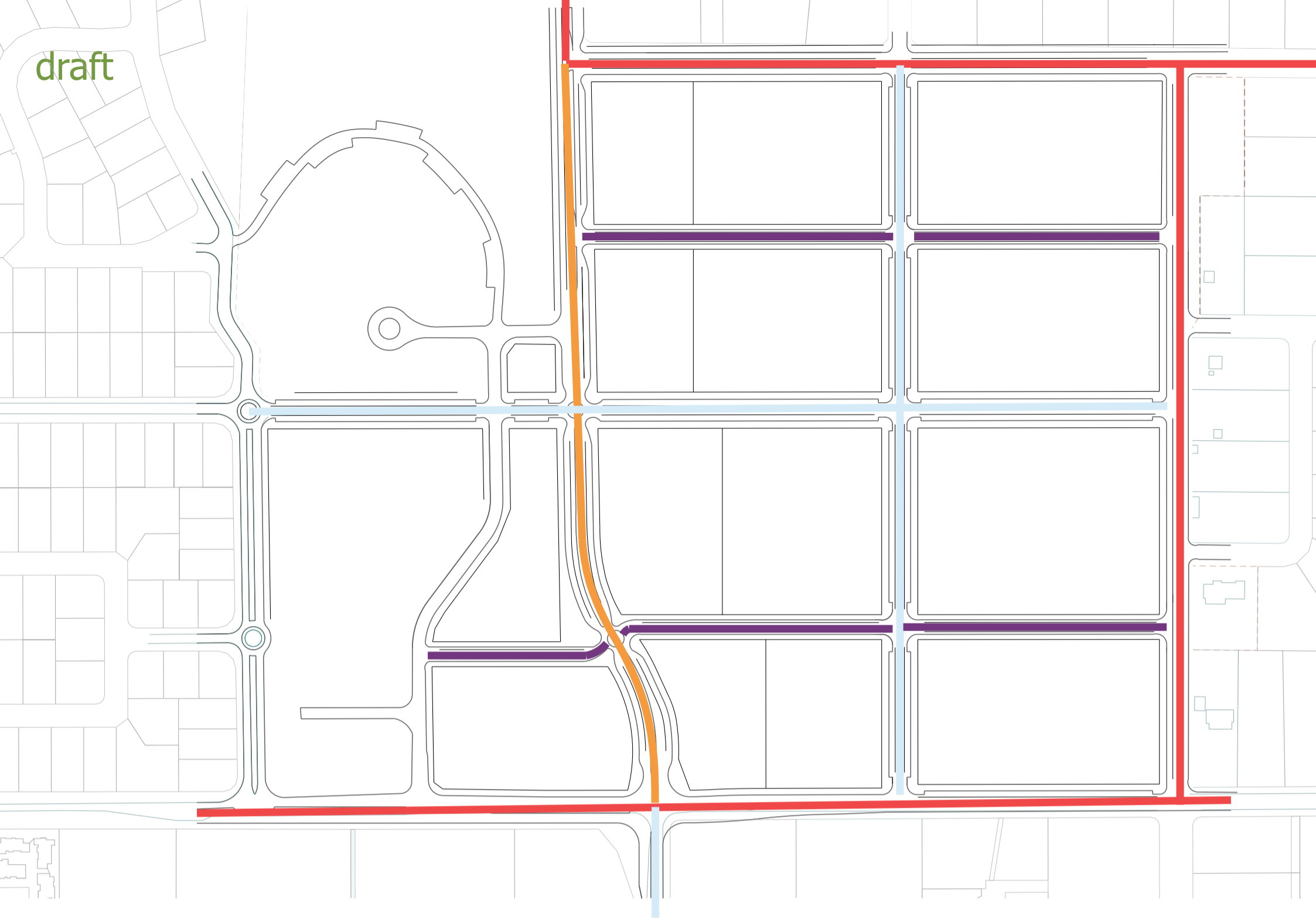


Cultural Marker



These are the places within the town centre that mark the significant cultural point of interest or ceremony. The ANZAC memorial within the renewed cultural precinct is reinforced in its current location.

draft



STREETS - HIERARCHY DIAGRAMS

Fundamental to the success of the town centre is a logical framework of good town streets. The pattern proposed in this Draft Master Plan builds on existing streets, reinvents some existing streets, and make new streets. Where streets are reinvented or made anew they can made fit for purpose and enjoy a freedom from constraint of existing cadastre or infrastructure. In these instances highfields should have great streets as its new important streets with a focus on amenity of the public realm and high quality address. Suggested here is a hierarchy of streets that balances new streets and renewed streets.

- TRAFFIC DETOUR
- 25M STREET
- NEW O'BRIEN AVENUE
- 20M STREET

New O'Brien Road

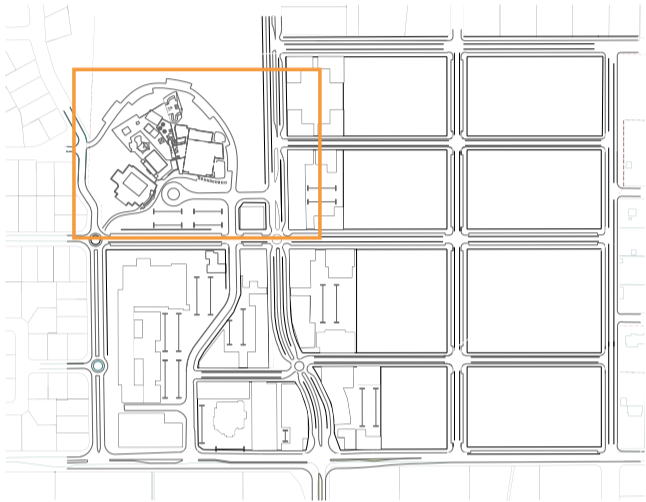


25m Street



20m Town Street/ Avenue





6.0 CULTURAL PRECINCT MASTERPLAN

INTRODUCTION

The proposed Highfields Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan has been designed as an incentive for the implementation of the broader Highfields Town Centre Masterplan. The Highfields Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan presents many place-making opportunities. The following pages outline 2 masterplan options, their elements and values.

A New Library as a Catalyst Project

The existing cultural precinct comprises of a cultural centre, aquatic centre and sports centre. Working with these existing facilities, the cultural masterplan proposes a new library as a catalyst project. By locating the library facility within close proximity to other community facilities such as the community centre, the library could maximise joint use and minimise duplication of facilities and infrastructure.

The future library occupies a predominant site on the corner of the realigned O’Brien Road and the cultural precinct. The library building will act as a driving force for the Cultural Precinct Masterplan, while also providing the opportunity to create a building that can be utilised by the growing Highfields community.

A Community Court or Shared Vehicular and Pedestrian Zone.

The community court is a versatile space that can be used for pick up or drops off for events in the community centre. The court could also be closed for community based events, celebrations, memorials and markets etc.

On Grade Parking

Adequate amounts of on grade parking provide easy access to the cultural precinct

KEY DRIVERS

CULTURAL LANDMARK

The library should be created as a cultural landmark of the Highfields town centre linking the mains street with the Cultural Precinct. The design for the library creates a place that can be utilized and loved within the community. This is achieved through the architecture creating a strong address to the street, as well as being open, welcoming and public in its design.



LIBRARY IN THE TREES

Embracing the natural beauty of Highfields is an important design driver for a future library. Engaging with the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve is a way of celebrating the natural beauty of Highfields and ensuring that the future development remains sensitive to the history and context of Highfields.



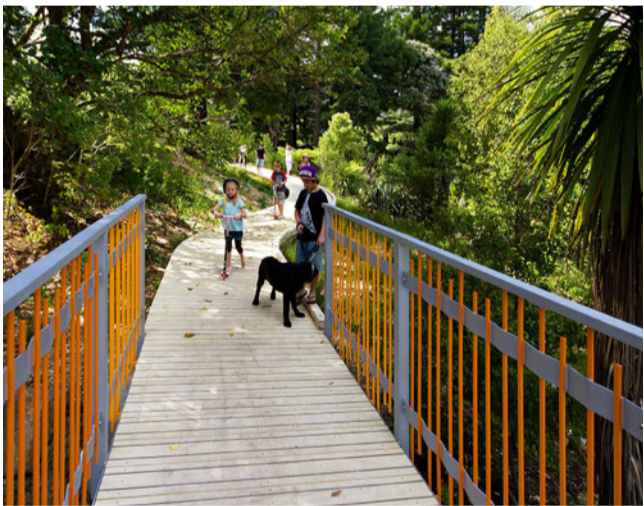
CULTURAL HEART

The Draft Master Plan recognises that there is an existing cluster of community facility's and aims to extend this to create a cultural heart within Highfields. The cultural heart brings the community together and promote interactions, through a space to hold events framed by supporting community buildings. Also a shared vehicular and pedestrian zones grants public access to all members of the community, and can be closed to host community events. The library and its architecture are crucial to the reframing of the cultural heart.



CELEBRATING THE RESERVE

The building of the Cultural Precinct should have a strong address to the street and a permeable address to the surrounding bushland. The Highfields is characterised by the surrounding bushland and therefore its inclusion in the Cultural Precinct is an important driver for the Draft Master Plan.

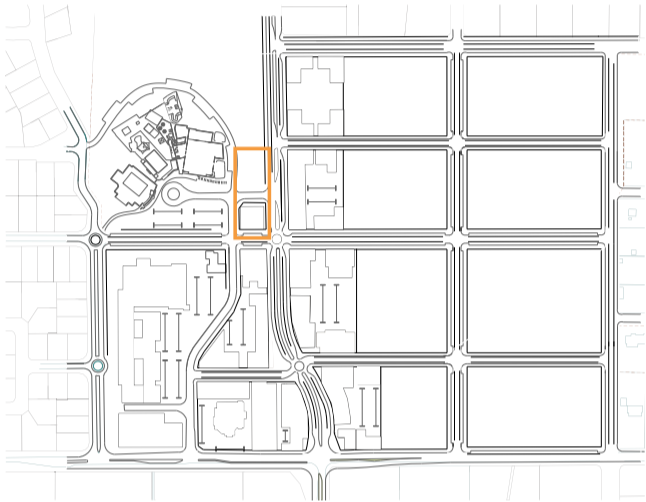


The Draft Master Plan celebrates the significance of the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve by giving the reserve an official entrance within the cultural precinct. Its inclusion into the Cultural Precinct celebrates its significance and the natural heritage of Highfields. Providing access to this sensitive landscape will help to enhance a wider community appreciation for the natural beauty of Highfields.

STRING OF PEARLS

Working with the existing community facilities, the proposed Draft Master Plan can be read as a collection of important cultural buildings that need to be unified with a single urban element. This urban element is flexible and could be an harbour or public walkway. Incorporating the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve, the Community Centre, the Aquatic Centre, the Gym and Sport Facility and the new Library.





LIBRARY

In a recent review of the library facilities around Toowoomba, it was identified that the library at Highfields needs an upgrade to better service the emerging community of Highfields. The Highfields Library has the largest turnover outside the City Library and is located in a growth neighbourhood. The performance of the existing Highfields Library is hampered by the size of the existing demountable facility. Replacement with a larger permanent facility is fundamental for improving the service delivery in this rapidly growing area.

The functional requirements of a community library is changing. Libraries are being re-branded, turning away from just a place to borrow books and towards a more vibrant interactive social place for all the community. A new Highfields library will need to include sufficient internet and computer access, places for social meetings, community groups and youth activities.

The Highfields library could be transformed into a place where the community can work or study and

also a place of informal gathering. It is this kind of place where the community interaction and growth is nurtured.

The library brief can be extended to include a cafe, digital hub, meeting rooms, private studies rooms, seminar rooms and large community spaces. In addition, a future library development will need to include sufficient at grade parking for easy access for all members of the community.

The location of the library is positioned between both schools. This makes the facility easily accessible for schools, students and families to utilise.



ICONIC ADDRESS

A library has the potential to be a strong civic building that is much loved and utilised by the community. In order to achieve this status, the proposed site for the library is on the corner of the new O’Briens Road and the cultural court.

The library should open onto the street and be welcoming to the general public. A café on the street front could be incorporated into the brief to encourage public engagement.



LIBRARY IN THE TREES

To extent the embrace of the natural beauty of Highfields, the library engages with the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve. Set with view into trees the library develops a relationship and connection to its surrounding.

The future library development could include natural elements such as a learning garden for youth groups and community engagement.



A PLACE FOR COMMUNITY

In recent times the way that the community utilities the library has changed. Traditional a repository for hard copy information, we are now seeing a shift to electronic information and knowledge exchange.

The library is also seen as a place for people to build a community. The future library will need to make provision for community meeting rooms, places for community engagement and most of all, be a place for people.

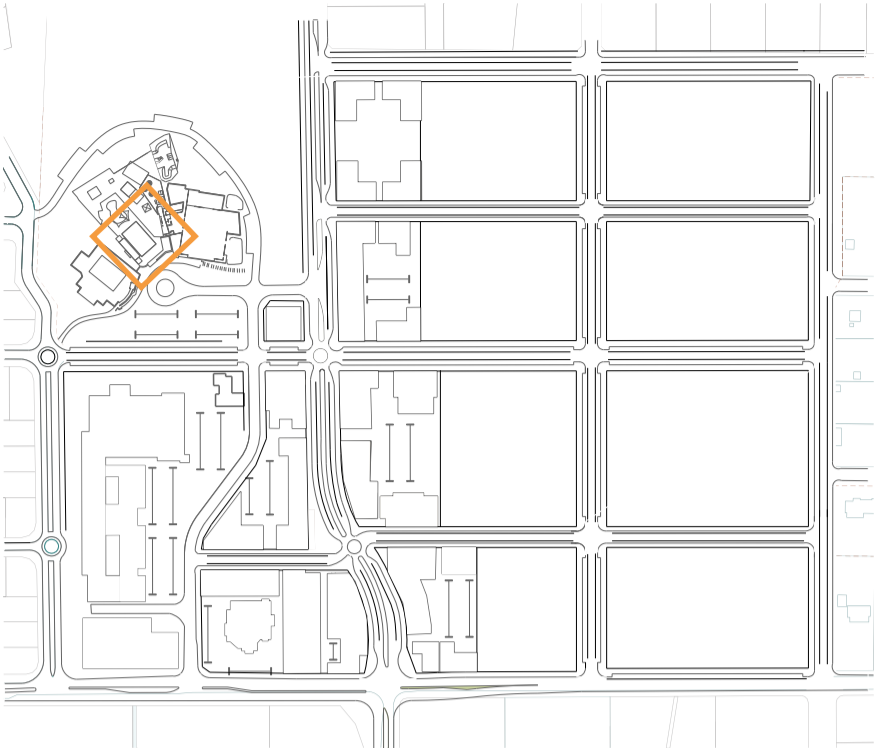




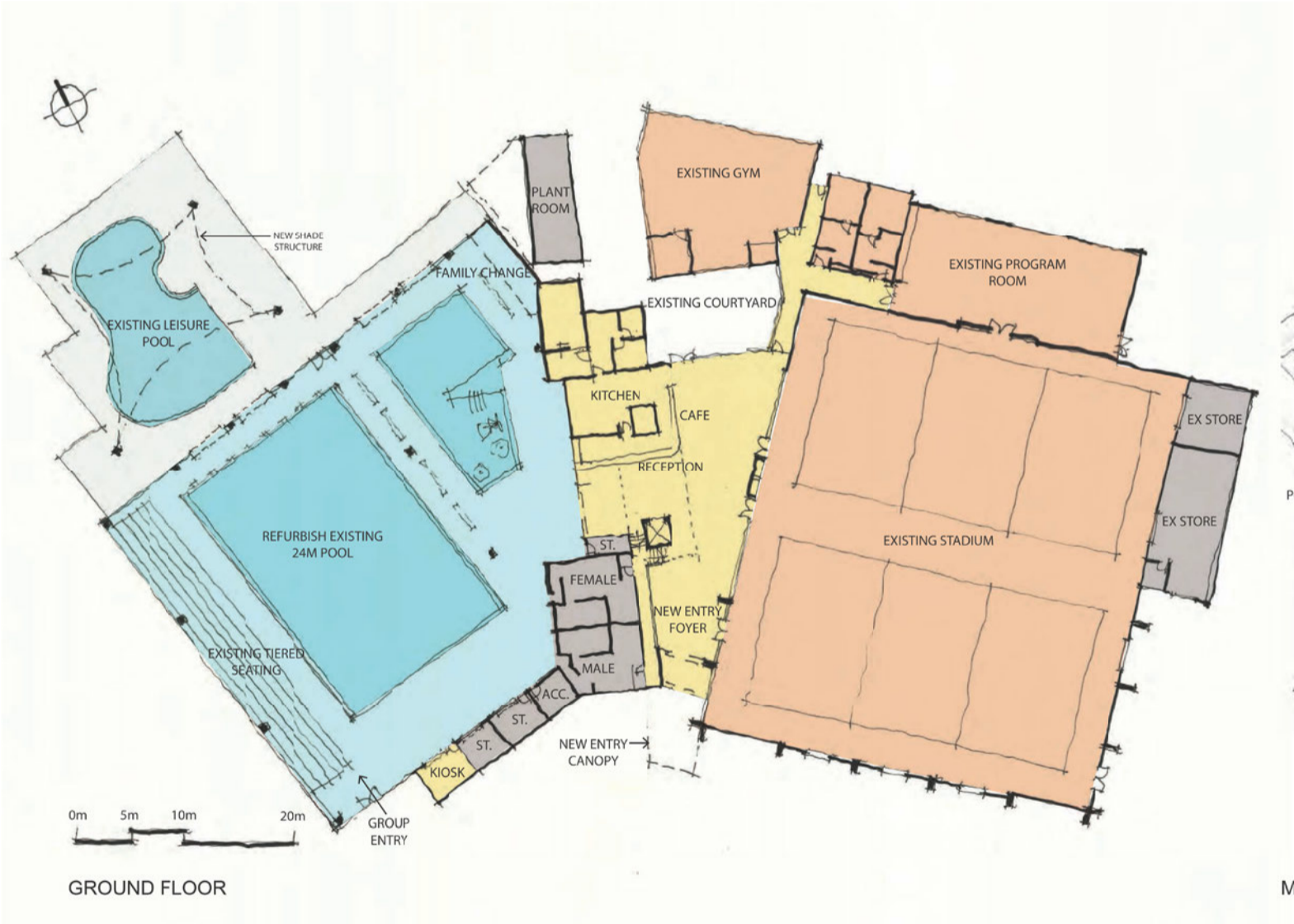
PUBLIC ART OUTSIDE THE AQUATIC CENTRE



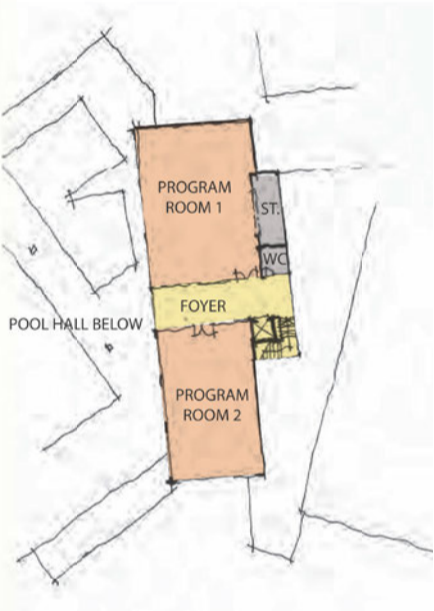
AQUATIC CENTRE - EXISTING 25M POOL



KEY PLAN



GROUND FLOOR



MEZZANINE LEVEL (NEW)

Highfields Fitness & Recreation Concept



EXISTING HIGHFIELDS AQUATIC FACILITIES

AQUATIC CENTRE

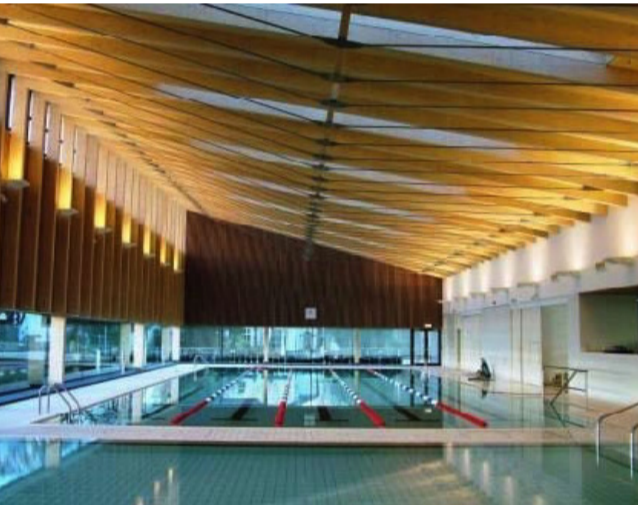
In a recent review of the aquatic facilities around Toowoomba, it was identified that the aquatic facilities at Highfields require an upgrade to provide year round utilisation. The review acknowledges that this upgrade is of high importance and should aim to be delivered in the next 1-3 years.

With the growing population and relatively young demographic of Highfields, an upgrade to the current aquatic facilities could see potential benefits to the local community. The review outlines that the Highfields current facilities could be redeveloped as an indoor, all year facility incorporating a 25m pool, new learn to swim pool, water features and additional change rooms.



ENCLOSING THE POOL

Enclosing the existing Highfields aquatic facilities will allow for year round utilization. An economical solution could be a simple cover or awning over the existing pool. An alternative, would be completely enclosing the aquatic facilities and potentially joining with the existing facility to provide a health and leisure centre.



LARGE LEISURE SPACES

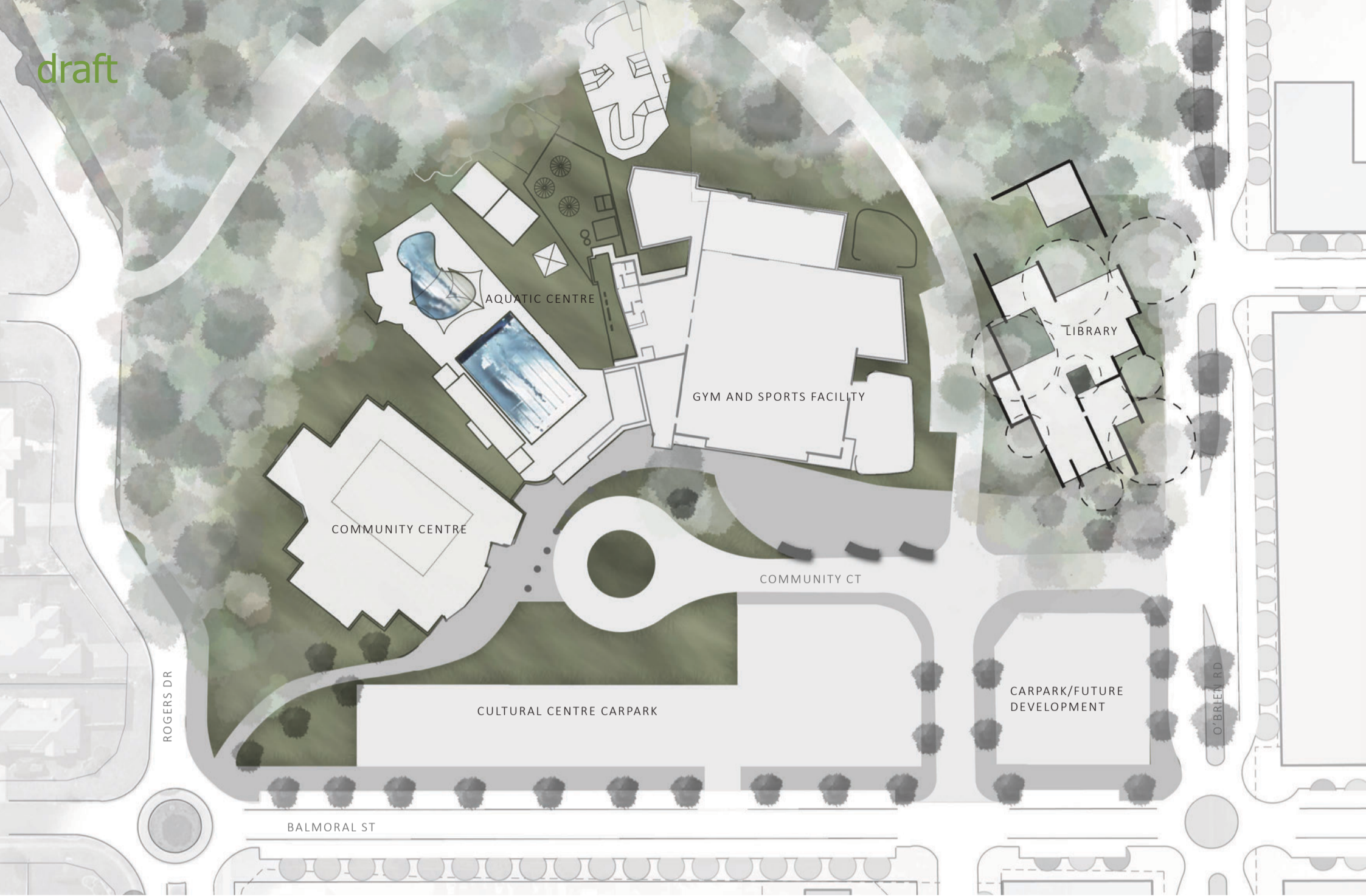
As outlined in the review, there is a growing trend to incorporate aquatic facilities within larger health and leisure centres. The existing gym, stadium and group leisure room could be incorporated into the upgrade of the aquatic facilities to create a combined Highfields Health and Fitness Centre. A health and fitness centre could be seen as a way of better servicing the growing community of Highfields.



SUFFICIENT AMENITIES

With the growing community of Highfields it is important to provide sufficient amenities to all age groups. The brief for the upgraded aquatic centre could include a heated children's pool to accommodate learn to swim lessons, as well as a refurbished 25 metre lap pool.



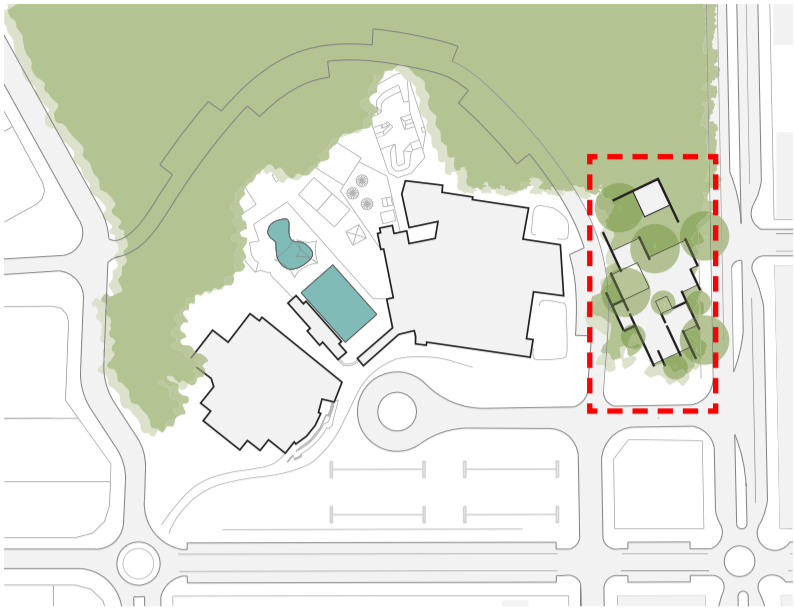


MASTERPLAN OPTION 1

Option one offers a catalyst to rethink the way the library can integrate with the landscape. Can the architecture be woven around the existing landscape in sensitive way, with minimal disruption to the existing site conditions? In option one the exciting significant trees are embraced and accommodated by the new building

Option one of the Draft Master Plan celebrates the surrounding bushland, by weaving the library through the significant trees on the site. Open learning courtyard are placed around the existing trees.

The new library has a prominent address on the new O'Brien Road, creating a landmark with in the town centre. It maintains the community court and the connection to the retail village. Allowing the cultural heart to be accessed by vehicular and pedestrians from O'Brien Road



SITE OPTION ONE



CULTURAL LANDMARK



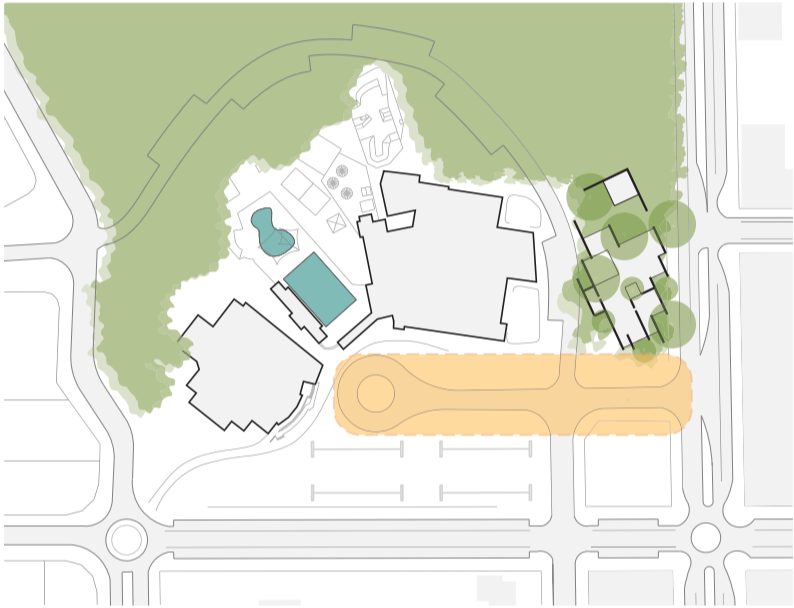
The library in option one is sited on the end of the string of pearls at the connection to O'Brien Road, creating a strong address.



LIBRARY IN THE TREES



The library in the trees is an inviting idea for people to come and visit, linking people to the surrounds and blurring the idea of inside and outside.



CULTURAL HEART



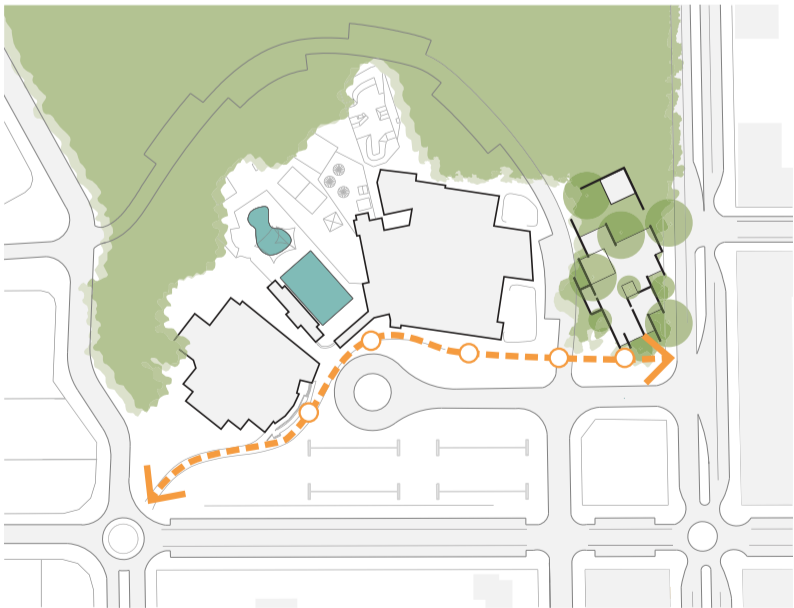
The library in option one caps the cultural court. Clustering the cultural elements along a spine and give ample on grade car parking the master plan creates a Cultural heart that can be used and enjoyed by the Highfields community.



CELEBRATING THE RESERVE



The access to the greater Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve is reduced in option one. The lane that runs between the library and the gym is an asset in accessing the reserve and careful treatment is needed to create meaning full entry.



STRING OF PEARLS



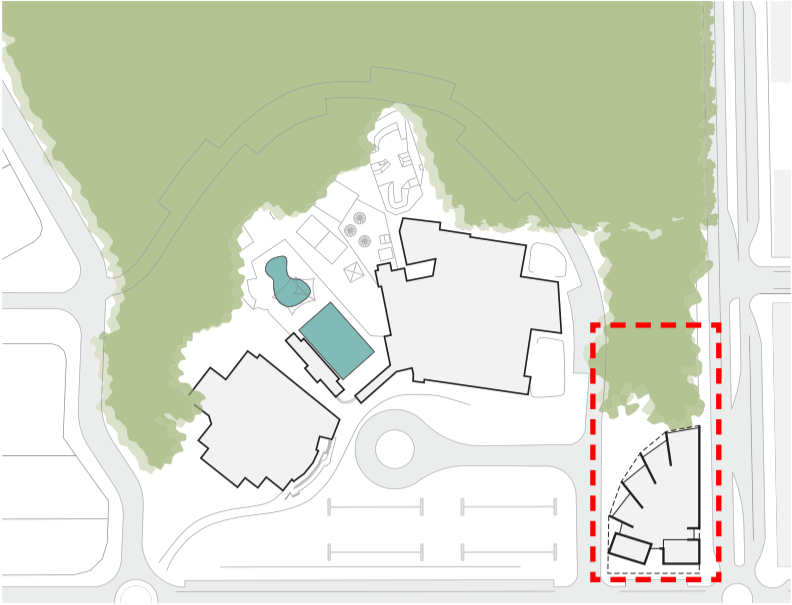
The string of pearls framework links all five elements, the community centre, the aquatic centre, the gym and sport facility, the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve and the new library, with a single urban element. In option one entrance to the reserve is constrained by the positioning of the library. The walk relates strongly with O'Brien Road and the town centre.



MASTERPLAN OPTION 2

Option two brings the library to the corner of Balmoral and O'Brien Road. A prominent intersection within the town centre, creating an iconic address for the landmark. The library looks into Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve, without removing any trees.

The library siting completes the built from on three sides of the cultural heart. This creates an enclosed space, for cultural events, framed by supporting buildings. Suggesting an opportunity to remake the community county in a new form that orients to the existing retail village.



SITE OPTION TWO



CULTURAL LANDMARK



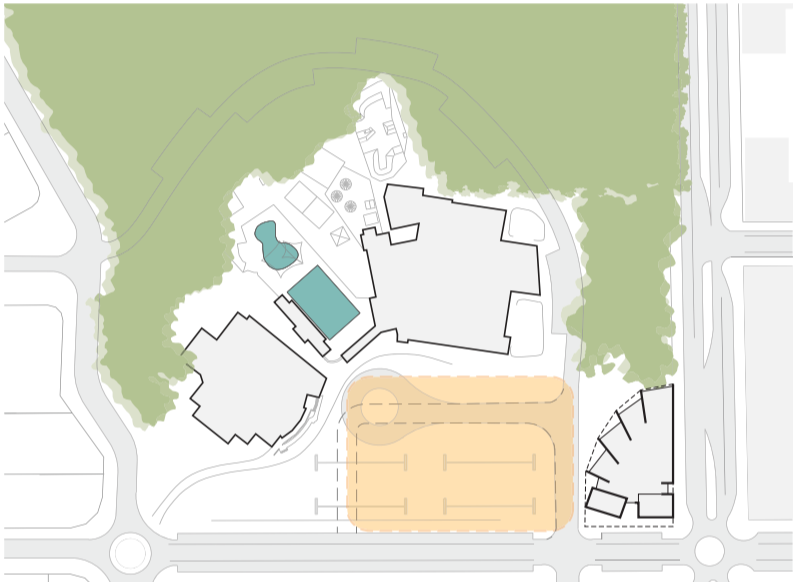
Option two sites the library on highly visible site on the corner of O’Brien Road and Balmoral Street. It frames the cultural heart completing the built form on 3 sides, linking the cultural and commercial zones, and framing the entrance to the cultural precinct.



LIBRARY IN THE TREES



The site in option two invites the library to capture the surrounding nature from deep within the plan. The library in the trees opens the possibility to having a learning garden and foster a greater connection to the natural environment.



CULTURAL HEART



Embraced by the string of pearls the cultural heart can be used for markets and community event. With supporting building surrounding the heart creating a framed cultural court. Within this is the possibility to rethink how the Community Ct is arranged.



CELEBRATING THE RESERVE



A visual connection to the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve is created from the cultural court. Option two give the reserve a street address with in the cultural precinct, this new address celebration significance of the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve. It does this by designing an official entry or gateway, into the reserve.



STRING OF PEARLS



The string of pearls framework links all five elements, the community centre, the aquatic centre, the gym and sport facility, the Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve and the new library, with a single urban element. The entrance to the reserve is given a strong positioning with in the cultural precinct and its own entrance. The library completes the string.

