

PART A:
THE
WANGARATTA
PROJECT



ABOUT THE WANGARATTA PROJECT

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

From its inception, the Wangaratta Project CBD Masterplan has aspired to reinvent masterplanning for Wangaratta - where previous more traditional masterplans or strategic planning efforts have either stalled, or not resulted in significant renewal, change and local support for the CBD. It has sought to do this by allowing the plan to emerge from an all-of-city conversation about the future of the place, and in the development of a masterplan that focuses as much on people, activity, experience and moments as it does on buildings, streets and large infrastructure.

there are people with dreams, ambition and knowhow to make things happen

This all-of-city conversation has meant that the ideas, concepts, strategies and actions emerging from the Masterplan are responding to the specific issues and opportunities identified by local people. They are true to the place and character of Wangaratta and true to the community and people of Wangaratta.

The CBD Masterplan references and builds upon the existing strategic work within the following documents, studies and plans, including but not limited to the following:

- Wangaratta Central Activities Area - Future Planning Report (August 2013), Rural City of Wangaratta
- Open Space Strategy - September 2012, Rural City of Wangaratta
- Recreation Strategy - September 2012, Rural City of Wangaratta
- Wangaratta Retail Audit and Development Plan Review/ Ovens Riverside Precinct Study (October 2008)
- Public Art Strategic Plan (15 May 2012), Rural City of Wangaratta
- Wangaratta Urban Design Framework (August 2002), Cox Sanderson Ness Architects, Macroplan

This Masterplan also highlights priority locations for each portfolio and separate advice has been provided to Council on implementation. This forms the basis of the next steps for the Masterplan ideas and concepts, and ensures that the plan's content can readily inform future grants and funding applications, internal Council planning, capital works budgets and programming, community engagement planning and other implementation processes.

The plan is for all of the people of Wangaratta - those who took part in the engagement process and those with aspirations for the city. It is particularly for those who want to make things happen in the CBD. Everyone from community groups, developers and local traders to Council and interested citizens.

It is intended to act as both an inspiration and a resource.

WHERE WE ARE IN THE PROCESS

The CBD Masterplan is intended to inspire, guide and provide backing when difficult or controversial decisions need to be made. It is intended to equip anyone in Wangaratta to make strategic decisions that will most directly and most powerfully contribute to achieving the vision for Wangaratta.

Maintaining momentum and energy beyond the initial Masterplan project is critical to ensure the elements and actions of the plan become reality over time. The implementation of Stage Four will rely on both Council and community efforts concurrently to ensure renewal and change takes place, guided by the agreed outcomes of the Masterplan.

Stage One:
REVIEW AND RESEARCH
review of previous consultations, local research



Stage Two:
AN ALL-OF-CITY CONVERSATION
engagement, testing of ideas and analysis



Stage Three:
THE MASTERPLAN DOCUMENT
a vision, a framework for strategic decision making, broad brush design decisions & key actions



Stage Four:
FURTHER WORK
detailed briefs, streetscape masterplans and business cases informed by the Masterplan

THE PURPOSE OF THE WANGARATTA PROJECT

The Masterplan has been developed as a framework for what could and should happen in the Wangaratta CBD into the future. It should focus local enthusiasm and energy across the Wangaratta community, including Council, business owners, traders and residents. It seeks to achieve this by bringing together a clear and ambitious road map for the future of the Wangaratta CBD, combining shared goals, an agreed vision for the future and achievable actions for the city centre.

We used comprehensive analysis and an engagement approach to uncover the key issues and challenges for the Wangaratta CBD. This document then proposes a suite of ideas and actions to resolve and progress these important issues.

This process builds upon the Wangaratta Central Activities Area - Future Planning Report by reinforcing and further developing the commitment within that report to:

'Undertake a place based approach to the development of the Wangaratta Central Activities Area'

It does not outline detailed actions or streetscape details or detailed development proposals - it is rather a tool to guide decisions and actions and make sure everyone is pulling in the same direction towards a shared vision for the future and includes guidance on implementation and next steps.

The Wangaratta Project Masterplan is also online. Check out the dedicated, easy to navigate website and access all of the details of the project, the engagement process, the Big Ideas, Quick Wins and all supporting material, at www.thewangarattaproject.com.au

THE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK IS MADE UP OF FOUR KEY ELEMENTS:

- a vision which captures a vibrant picture of the Wangaratta CBD people want for the future
- goals to set a clear target to work towards and to guide daily decision-making and actions by people implementing elements of the Masterplan
- big ideas that underpin the goals. These are organised into five portfolios - categories that cover a broad range of aspects of the CBD from arts to business to public space
- quick wins - smaller, easier, more nimble projects that can happen immediately to begin to realise the vision

WHAT THE MASTERPLAN IS & WHAT IT ISN'T

The masterplanning process began by asking questions of both Council and the broader community of Wangaratta about what they wanted the Masterplan to be and the job that they thought it should do.

It focused the energy on identifying and addressing important issues around the CBD, rather than providing a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the status quo in town. This means that the Masterplan is designed to solve specific local problems and take advantage of specific local opportunities, mapping out aspirations for the CBD that are more responsive to the local conditions and more effectively bringing change and renewal to Wangaratta.

This is what was agreed:

the masterplan is:

- for anyone and everyone in Wangaratta to pick up and use
- inspiring, it makes you feel like getting involved and making good things happen
- ambitious, it pushes boundaries and finds a Wangaratta way to make things happen
- a broad vision document that clearly guides later detailed strategies and plans
- about buildings, land, roads and parks but also about things like the life on the street, economic growth, local pride and special experiences
- shaped by the whole community and with broad ownership
- issues based so that it focuses its energy on where change could and should occur
- achievable, a practical action plan
- a long term vision that can effectively guide decisions for the next 10 to 20 years

- in plain english and easy to read
- a tool to guide development
- a tool to attract investment and bring good things to Wangaratta

the masterplan is not:

- useless, a door stop, another boring strategy that sits on a shelf
- too technical - it's not a structure plan, detailed design plans or an urban design framework
- too detailed - it's not a detailed design for a streetscape, a site or a development
- a comprehensive document of every street, site, building, business or constraint for the city centre
- hard to understand, boring or wordy
- unrealistic, a broad wishlist, all talk no action

It has been a great town to spend my life in, please look after it well!

Everything is achievable if you have the right people in the right places and if there is a good plan.

NEXT STEPS

There are many actions that ultimately follow a masterplan that are essential to the success of the analysis and ideas. For Wangaratta these may include:

- funding and grant investigations and applications
- detailed masterplan design work on specific land holdings, sites or precincts (where required)
- detailed streetscape masterplan work on specific CBD streets or lanes (where required)
- detailed discussions and liaison between Council and specific land-owners, business owners or traders (where required)
- meetings and liaison between Council, key stakeholders, State Government agencies and authorities (where required)
- cost estimates, feasibility and business case work to determine viability of proposals
- staging and timing investigations to integrate masterplan ideas, concepts and actions into capital works and other budget timelines

Big Ideas

- expand the arts and cultural precinct
- develop new events, activities, festivals and happenings
- celebrate the place of textiles
- create opportunities for live music
- support emergent, temporary, interactive and informal artforms
- expand the role of learning

Quick Wins

- remove barriers to busking
- hold an annual Ideas-a-thon
- install infrastructure for live performance in public places
- design locally themed Christmas decorations

Big Ideas

- develop an iconic provedore
- advocate for improved train services
- strengthen the offer of local shops, cafes and restaurants

Quick Wins

- Shop Local Wangaratta
- install pop-up op shops in vacant shops
- find a space for coworking
- develop a program of mentoring, training and inspiration for local businesses
- promote the breadth of produce of the region in the CBD
- enable new retail partnerships
- incentivise green business within the CBD

Big Ideas

- transform Sydney Beach into a beautiful, natural oasis
- intensify active play, recreation and events at Apex Park
- strengthen Merriwa Park as a point of arrival
- enhance King George Gardens' role as a place of contemplation and history
- create a landmark sculptural shade structure at Riverside Square
- intensify the experience of Wangaratta Railway Station
- reimagine the water towers & Goods Shed as spaces for emergent arts
- further integrate Wangaratta Primary School with the life of the city

Quick Wins

- support cafe owners in opening onto the street
- relocate CFA infrastructure from Apex Park

Big Ideas

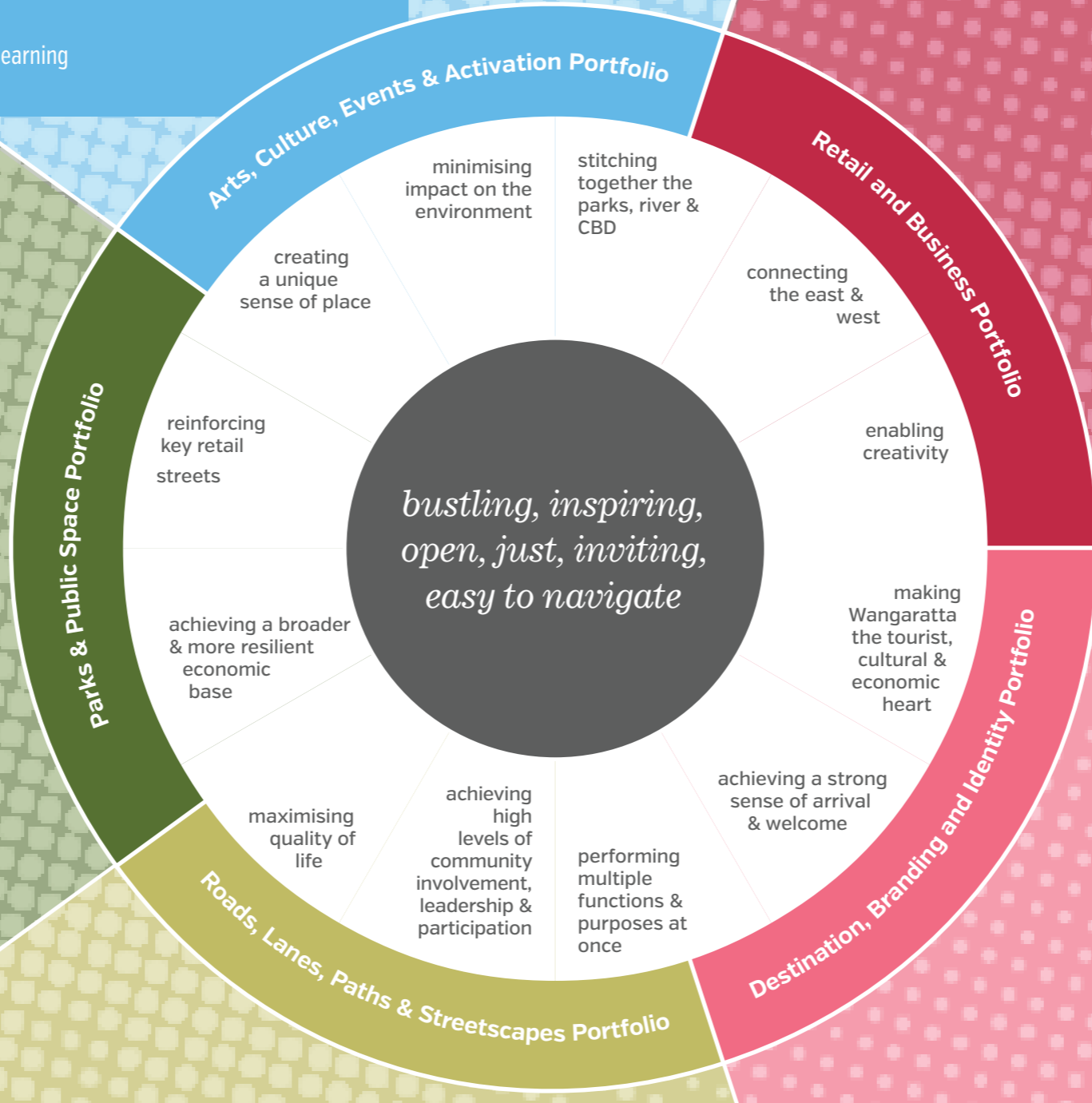
- improve streetscapes
- make crossing CBD streets safe & easy
- increase shade & comfort by greening the CBD
- improve the arrival experience

- embed art in public spaces, walls & streets
- bring life to the laneways
- create a new laneway public space - Maloney's Square
- create the Wangaratta Loop - a trail around the CBD

- make CBD car parking more efficient
- transform large format retail sites into more people friendly places
- consider options for the North East Water Treatment Facility

Quick Wins

- plant a community garden at Wangaratta Primary School
- enhance the sense of arrival through green arrival points
- commission a program of temporary artworks & street art



Big Ideas

- create a compelling brand for the CBD
- bring accommodation of all kinds to the CBD
- make Wangaratta a cyclists' paradise
- make the Wangaratta CBD youth friendly

Quick Wins

- establish a column of positive stories about local businesses
- publish a local recipe book
- create a local produce map
- make public transport information more accessible
- investigate options for relocation of the visitor information centre
- support the growth of the Wangaratta Farmers Market

WHERE WANGARATTA IS NOW

Wangaratta is a place full of possibilities. It is surrounded by the beauty of the King Valley, the Ovens Valley and alpine regions with abundant produce, world class wines and stunning tourist destinations that draw people from far and wide.

The Pangerang Aborigines, a nation of sub-clans, were the traditional owners of this beautiful land.

Ever since western colonisation, it has been a region of settlement, abundance and solace for everyone from European refugees, bush rangers, gold rush fortune seekers, farmers working the land for tobacco, wine and olives to those seeking a rural idyll, affordable land and a high quality of life.

The city itself has real strengths in its concentrated and walkable CBD, bookended by the revitalised river precinct and the lush parklands of Merriwa Park, its renowned Jazz Festival, creative spirit and its locational advantages on train and cycle routes.

However the city also faces serious challenges. Broader shifts in the economy, the impact of technology on shopping, working, learning and communicating as well as changing tastes have affected Wangaratta's retail offer, vacancy rates and levels of trust in the community. In addition, the challenges of providing for younger adults and a brain drain of young people to the bright lights of Melbourne have had impact on the attractiveness of the CBD to younger generations.

With challenging political and governance issues to grapple with and growing community and economic pressures in recent years, Wangaratta has had its share of tough times. The Wangaratta Project offers the opportunity to look to the future and to inject new energy, new ideas and new life into the city and catalyse new confidence and new investment.

KEY STRENGTHS OF WANGARATTA'S CBD

- it is a walkable, compact CBD
- great community events such as Down by the River and the Jazz Festival
- parks and gardens of different types and kinds
- great local produce
- it's at the confluence of two beautiful rivers which form part of the city
- it's a strategic location, a gateway city to a region with lots to offer visitors and residents
- significant green public spaces surrounding an urban core
- great examples of heritage architecture
- excellent assets in the Performing Arts Centre, Library and the Art Gallery
- local individuals and groups that are passionate about Wangaratta
- an emerging cafe and foodie culture
- sports, bikes and physical activity of all kinds

KEY GAPS OF WANGARATTA'S CBD

- a minimal sense of welcome or arrival by road or by train
- the dominance of cars and car parks in the CBD
- little existing points of difference from other areas and lack of a clear brand
- poor wayfinding generally
- a lack of connection between key destinations in the city centre
- a lack of a strong, unique identity and personality in the CBD
- minimal infrastructure that is currently taking advantage of the growing cycling culture
- the town is too quiet on weekends when many shops are closed
- it has a poor train service and scheduling
- historical issues around governance, consultation and trust

*Everything is so close,
you can walk everywhere*

*The Wangaratta
CBD is stuck -we
need more life in it*

*Wangaratta is well placed
geographically. 1.5 hours
to the snow, 2.5hours to
Melbourne. 1 hour to an
airport link in Albury, train
service to Melbourne and
Sydney and 45 minutes to
open water for boating.*

*Wangaratta CBD is like the hole
in the middle of the donut that
is the wider region. It needs to
become the jam in the donut*

THE PROCESS FOR THE PROJECT

An all-of-city conversation

Approaching masterplanning differently also involves engaging differently. A huge part of the masterplanning process has been a conversation with the people of Wangaratta that has allowed us to continually generate, test and refine ideas with the community.

For details of the engagement process and what people told us, see Part C: Engagement Summary.

Who did we speak to?

A really good mix of people across the community from all different backgrounds, ages, genders and occupations. Targeted sessions have taken place with key groups such as local business, Council staff and young people.

What kind of activities did we do?

We carried out workshops, a photo competition, an online survey, a session at the Youth Summit, phone interviews, surveys in nearby regional centres, an artwork mapping local people's stories and conversations on social media. The engagement culminated in a big public event called the Ideas Festa where we brought a number of ideas to life like a laneway gallery, colourful shade structures, a keyboard pedestrian crossing from chalk, music, food and more.

How many people took part?

Around 900 people have taken part in the conversation so far throughout the whole process; during the events of the initial engagement period, throughout the development of the ideas for the Masterplan and in response to the exhibition of the first draft.

What people told us they would like to see improved:

- pedestrian movement
- shade
- riverside walking and recreation
- retail mix
- non-retail CBD uses
- public transport information
- more places to go that don't cost money
- more shops, services or events targeting young people
- youth employment and opportunities to study
- vacancy rates
- rent levels
- parking
- trust, communications and attitudes
- accommodation options
- opening hours
- underused spaces

What people told us they saw as key opportunities for the CBD:

- music
- arts and culture
- the environment
- cycling
- tourism
- branding
- events and festivals
- health
- potential for collaboration
- enabling new kinds of businesses
- support for existing businesses
- becoming a city that embraces change
- technology
- new ways of working, shopping, learning and sharing ideas





Ideas From the Community

Throughout the engagement process for The Wangaratta Project, people who took part shared hundreds of fabulous, modest, ambitious, audacious, sensible, weird and wonderful ideas for the Wangaratta CBD. Here is a sample of just some of them.

annual program of events and festivals

textiles make-a-thons

local heroes weekly newspaper column

digital displays on energy use and environmental impact

outdoor events

free bike hire from local businesses

use technology to understand markets/demand for new products

a new centre for ideas, words and stories

large scale art installations

locally branded reusable shopping bags

visual merchandising design competition

interactive artworks with sound, light and technology

quirky public art

a new brand and logo

new social enterprises

vertical gardens

better infrastructure for local events

new tourism campaign that lets people know about quality of life and affordability

mother's care centre in empty shop

a giant slide into Merriwa Park

reuse old industrial buildings as arts spaces

make shopping experience more local

environmental business incentives

new unique shops

events on the river

more unique products in the shops

pop-up op shops

new ways to experience music, art and film

gateway sculptures to welcome you into town

promote renewable energy, reuse and biodiversity

local recipe book

new pedestrian crossings

textile banners

local produce markets

coworking spaces

better linked up bike paths & facilities for cyclists

kinetic shade structures

more interesting shops in the Co-Store

emergent art

improvements to the Ovens River and surrounds

public art program

get Council to act as broker for local business involvement in events

riverside glamping

beautification of the laneways

environmental initiatives

joint trader events, marketing campaigns, fundraising, branding, lobbying, etc.

integrate the Jazz Festival into the fabric of the city

shaded areas at the Ovens Riverside Precinct

local business mentoring

skills swaps, incentives and mentoring for existing small businesses

hand stitched banners along Murphy Street celebrating the textile history of Wangaratta

reimagine Big W

promote and encourage behaviour that minimises impact on the environment

refresh King George V Gardens

rickshaw taxis