



Mackay Waterfront Place Strategy

June 2025

The Mackay Waterfront Place Strategy was developed with the support of the Queensland Government in association with Mackay Regional Council.



Queensland
Government



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REGIONAL COUNCIL



MACKAY
WATERFRONT





We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Yuwi people, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the young emerging leaders.

Disclaimer:

The Mackay Waterfront Place Strategy has been informed by community and stakeholder insights, data and surveys undertaken during the project program, and supported by research and information gathered from other aligned strategies. Any findings, conclusions or recommendations only apply to the aforementioned circumstances and no greater reliance should be assumed.

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Cover image: 'Bee Mindful Mural' by Krimson and Scott Nagy





Message from the Mayor

Mackay has been on a transitional journey to revitalise our City Centre and Waterfront for more than a decade. The transformation really began in earnest with the declaration of the Waterfront PDA development scheme in May 2019.

Tremendous inroads have been made. Stage one and two of the Riverside Revitalisation Project – the River Wharves public realm infrastructure and the Pioneer River Floating Pontoon – are complete.

Revitalisation requires more than infrastructure of course. It requires various stakeholders – council, business owners, developers, community organisations and residents – working together towards a shared vision.

That vision is outlined in this Mackay Waterfront Place Strategy.

This is not just another Master Plan. This strategy is about incremental changes delivered in partnership with stakeholders and the community to activate the waterfront along our beautiful blue water river.

Council would like to thank everyone for their input during the extensive engagement period.

Council conducts community engagement on all of our strategies, but this was different. We saw enthusiastic collaboration with stakeholders passionate about their City Centre and Waterfront. They didn't just want to "have their say" – they wanted to get involved.

We were blown away by the level of positive energy surrounding this project.

It's now clear it's time for change and we are excited to work with the community and key stakeholders to bring about that change.

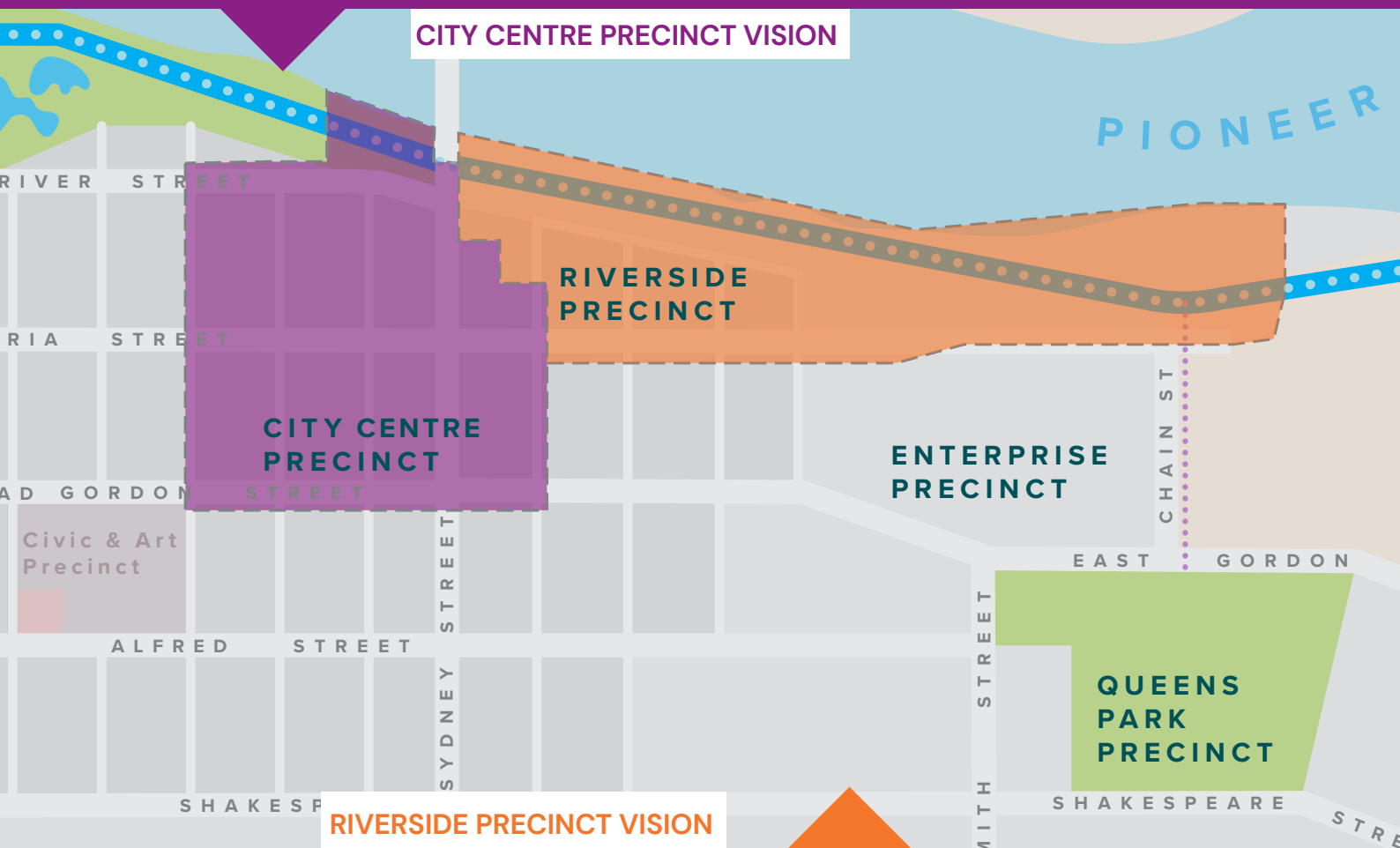


1. Introducing the Place Strategy

This document provides a roadmap for the Mackay Waterfront's various stakeholders – council, business owners, developers, community organisations and residents – to work together towards a shared vision for a revitalised Mackay Waterfront including the City Centre and Riverside precincts.

The Place Strategy is based on extensive engagement with the people who live, work and invest in this city. Over the course of many conversations with community, locals painted a picture of the Mackay Waterfront they hoped to see:

A City Centre where local businesses thrive; where people wander on foot through attractive shaded streets to visit boutique shops, pop into independent cafes spilling out onto the street and stay in town for evening drinks and food from around the world. In this vision, locals and out-of-towners come into the City Centre on the weekend for its thriving culture scene with music and arts at every corner, and an annual program of events celebrating creativity and a truly multicultural community.



Complementary to our City Centre, and just a few minutes' walk along Wood Street, you'll find our city's home of recreation and relaxation. We walk, run and cycle looking out over the mangroves then grab a coffee at bustling Bluewater Quay, or take a boat out onto the crystal-clear water to see Mackay from a whole new perspective. We unwind with dining and drinks overlooking the water, our kids play on the grass, and we gather in this colourful tropical space for key cultural moments throughout the year, proud to show off our blue river to new visitors.





Who is this document for?

Making active city centres is everyone's business.

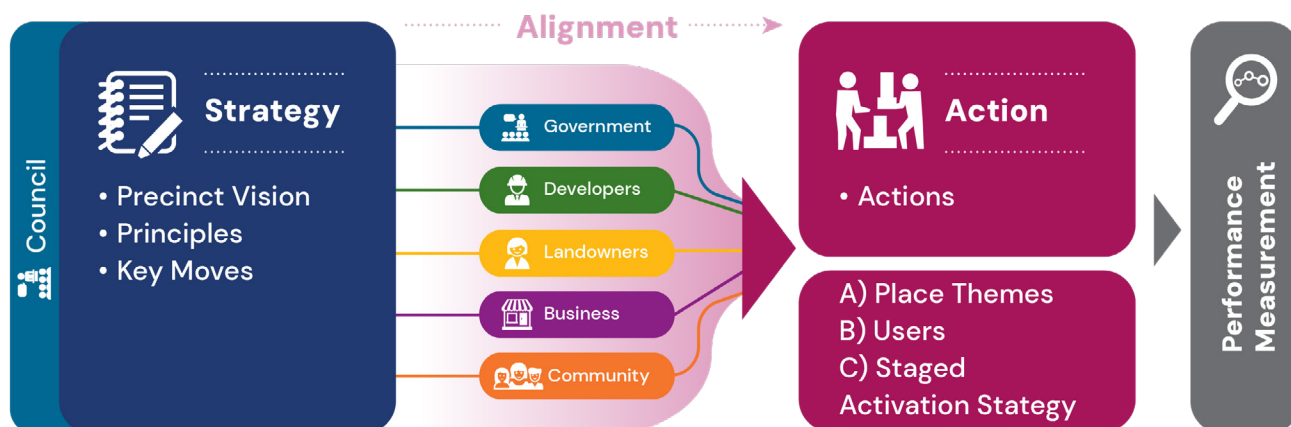
Local residents who want to support safe and attractive centres for locals to meet and children to play.

Local traders who want to increase business turnover by improving customer experience.

Landowners who want to increase the value of the centre by providing a popular place for the community.

Councillors and Council Officers who want to support community participation; inform and prioritise council investment.

The Place Strategy offers achievable stepping stones towards reaching the community's vision, with a part for everyone to play. It focuses on ways to shape, activate and manage public spaces over the short and longer term to unlock potential, remove barriers and achieve growth in a coordinated and sustainable way. Mackay is a city brimming with ideas, creativity and energy to drive positive change, and this strategy offers a framework to capitalise on that momentum, where locals are empowered to shape the future of their place.



2. Background

In 2018, Economic Development Queensland designated the Mackay Waterfront as a Priority Development Area (PDA). The PDA designation aims to promote development to unlock significant community benefit and local economic outcomes. It does this by facilitating accelerated development that creates jobs, promotes inner city living and supports public space improvements that create a vibrant and well-used public realm for the community.

In 2019, planning and design for the PDA area took place which resulted in two key documents designed to guide future growth in the area.

The Mackay Waterfront PDA Development Scheme is the planning tool that will assist in planning, carrying out, promoting, coordinating and regulating the development of land in the PDA under a streamlined process. The PDA Development Scheme sets out regulations to control building form and land use as well as describes the infrastructure required to support achievement of the desired land use plan. Importantly, the PDA Development Scheme outlines an implementation strategy with objectives and actions that complement the PDA vision.

The Mackay Waterfront Master Plan sets out the public realm vision and concepts for the Mackay Waterfront to inform more detailed design of individual projects in the future and complement the objectives and requirements of the PDA Development Scheme.

The Master Plan establishes the overall vision for the Mackay Waterfront through the incorporation of the community's ideas and previous investigations completed by council for areas within the PDA.

The Master Plan and PDA Development Scheme can be viewed online at mackaywaterfront.com.au.

The purpose of this Place Strategy is to focus on shorter-term actions that can be delivered by council or by others that will catalyse activity on the streets and public spaces in the City Centre and Riverside Precincts. Actions and objectives build upon strategies outlined in the Mackay Waterfront PDA Master Plan and implementation actions described in the Mackay Waterfront PDA Development Scheme.

The PDA encapsulates five precincts as outlined in the below plan.





What this document does

- This document provides a framework with suggested actions for council, businesses, investors and the community. It aims to be a handbook to enable people from different sectors to work together towards a shared goal of a vibrant and successful City Centre and Riverside.
- The strategy uses insights gained from extensive engagement to understand what Mackay's stakeholders want to achieve, what their current barriers are, and what opportunities are still to be unlocked.
- The strategy uses the expertise of urban design and placemaking practitioners to recommend actions that are both achievable and impactful, many of which have been successfully demonstrated in other places.

What this document does not do

- This document does not aim to solve the bigger societal problems faced by Mackay and so many of Australia's cities today such as homelessness, climate change, rising construction costs and development feasibility. It focuses on what can be done in the short term, with the aim that these short-term actions can positively contribute to alleviating some of the most visible symptoms of these systemic challenges.
- This document for the most part does not nominate specific people or groups to take on specific roles but instead offers a guide on the sectors that can help best with achieving a specific task.
- This document does not attribute a specific cost to each action but instead offers a rough cost guide to allow stakeholders themselves to decide on the appropriate approach for them.

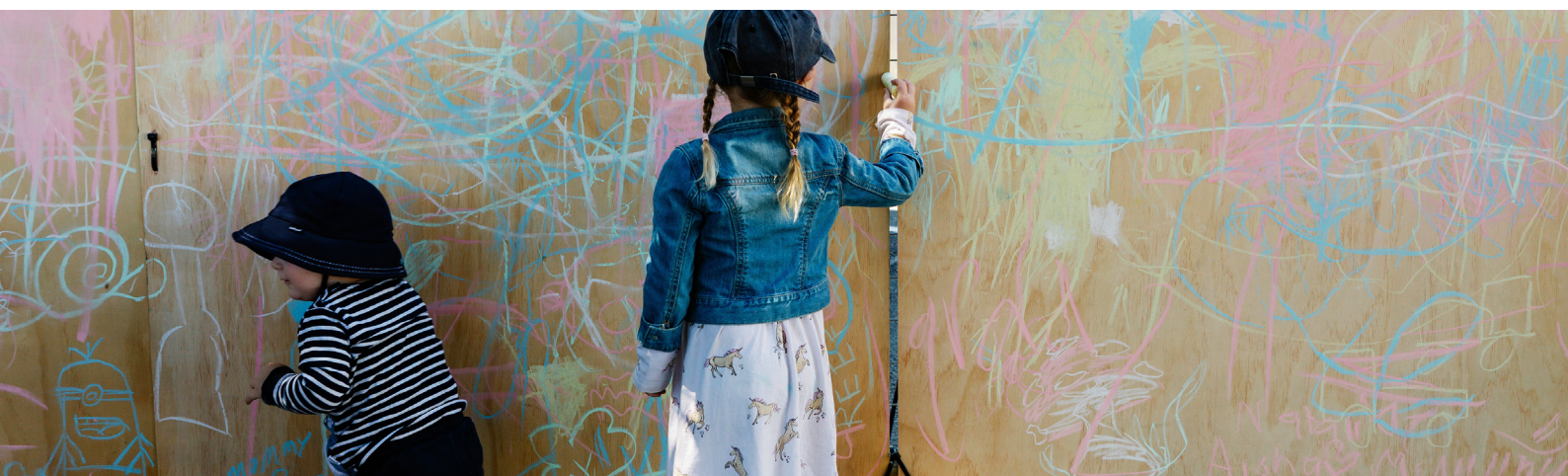
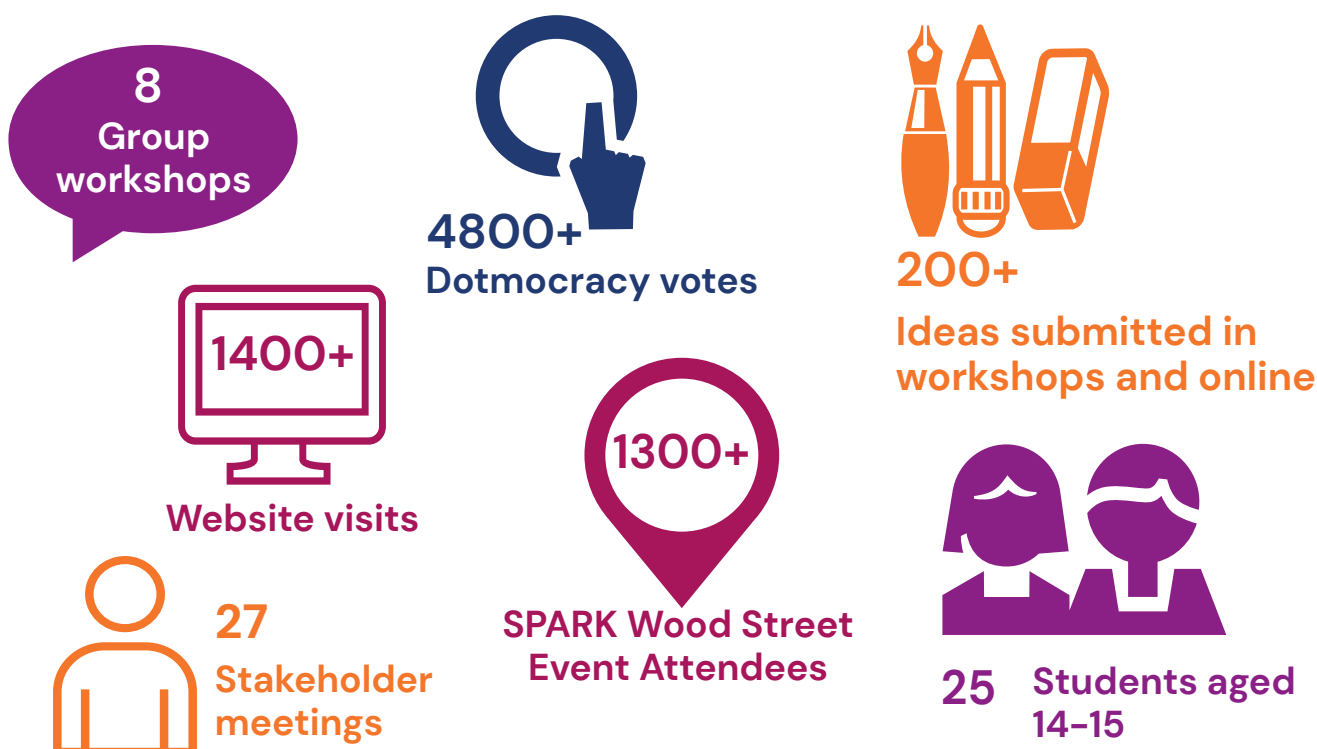


3. Engagement

Consultation to inform this strategy took place across two rounds of engagement during 2024 and 2025. Engagement focused on gathering ideas, seeking feedback on the draft Place Strategy and asking community to identify their priority actions. The engagement included workshop sessions with youth, businesses, community members and council officers as well as one-on-one interviews, online surveying and a series of pop-ups at community events, markets and SPARK Wood Street .

The SPARK Wood Street event was delivered in collaboration with community and businesses during the engagement period. It was designed to test ideas put forward to bring activity into the streets and public spaces of the City Centre and Riverside Precinct.

Visit ConnectingMackay.com.au to view the Mackay Waterfront Place Strategy Engagement Reports.



4. Strategy Snapshot

4 PLACE THEMES

Mackay has a distinct identity and is memorable. **Four place themes** used to describe us include:

01 Active blue water lifestyle

02 Art Deco Sugartown

03 Tropical urban creativity

04 Multicultural prosperity

We are working together to activate, revive and regenerate our City Centre and Waterfront. These **six principles** underpin our strategy. They define what we are working towards and how we will go about it.

6 PRINCIPLES

- Life on the streets:** Our streets are alive with activity. They are memorable places that prioritise the safety and comfort of people all year round.
- Reliable:** We are clever about when we activate, striving to create ever-changing experiences on regular occasions. You know when things will be happening and where.
- Climate resilient and sustainable:** We work to ensure a balance of environmental conservation and recreation as our waterfront develops.
- Comfortable activation:** We focus on creating outdoor activity in the evenings in summer and during winter. We create more shade, prioritising tree planting and greening to create comfortable and amenable public spaces.
- Big picture alignment:** Our efforts align with our city's long-term vision. These are captured in our strategy's key moves.
- Enabling and collaborative:** We work together with our business and resident community, unlocking opportunities and streamlining processes to enable everyone to play a role.

We are focusing on **two precincts** that each have **five key moves** we will work towards.

KEY MOVES FOR 2 PRECINCTS

CITY CENTRE PRECINCT

Connect the City Centre to the waterfront via Wood Street

Enhance City Centre gateways and heart

Activate public spaces, laneways and alleyways

Encourage innovative street art

Promote point of difference for 'Mackay local' City Centre business offerings

RIVERSIDE PRECINCT

Tell place-based history (inc. First Nations)

Deliver short-term incubator activations

Pursue active recreation opportunities

Collaborate with Riverside Precinct stakeholders to drive activation of public realm

Attract families and youth

Success will come through implementation of **27 actions** that address the way we shape, activate and manage our precincts. With input from our community we have identified six priorities indicated below with a white outline:

27 ACTIONS

SHAPE

S1 S4 S7
S2 S5 S8
S3 S6 S9

ACTIVATE

A1 A4 A7
A2 A5 A8
A3 A6 A9

MANAGE

M1 M4 M7
M2 M5 M8
M3 M6 M9

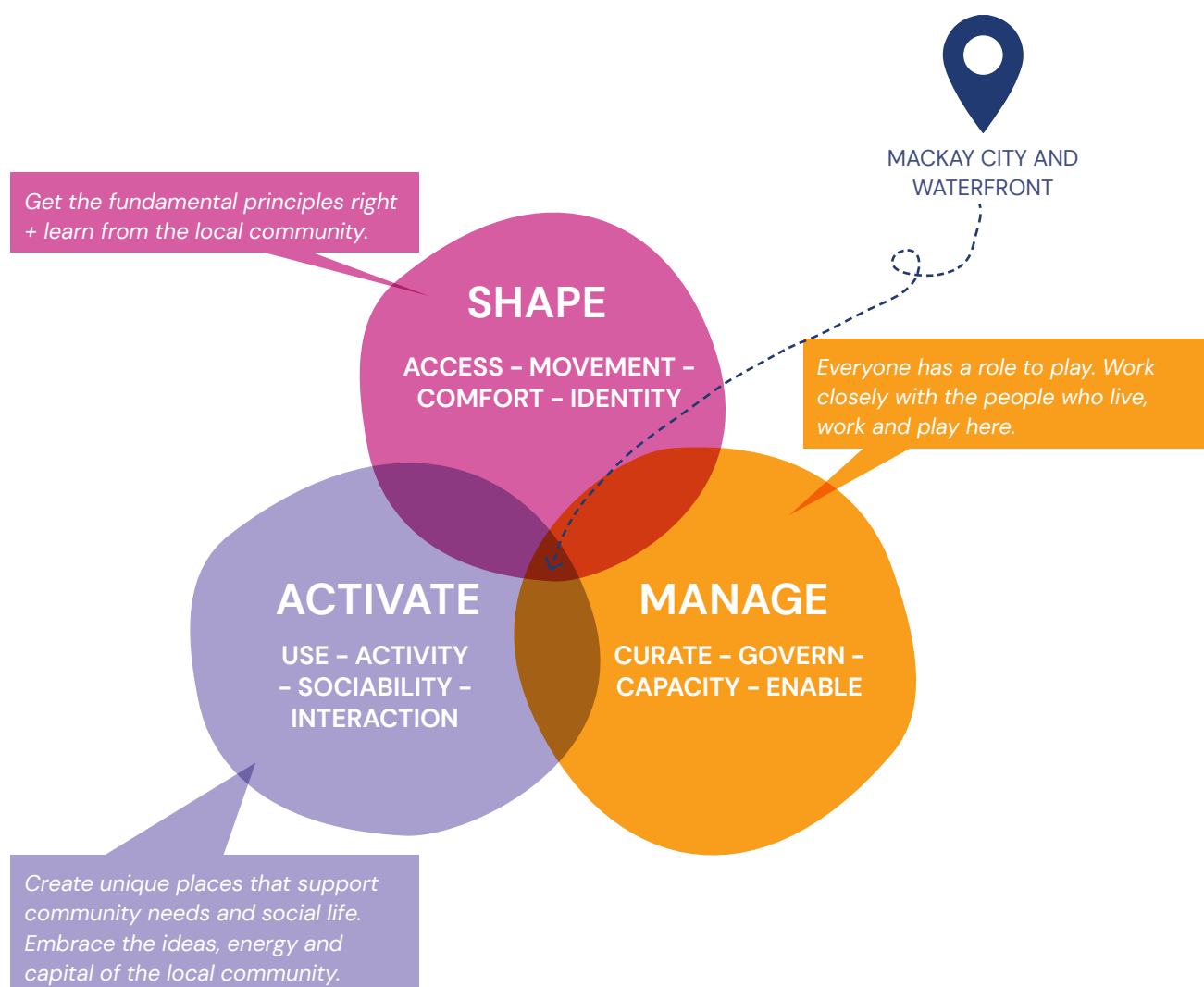


5. Actions

Shape, Activate, Manage

When thinking about successful places, a person's experience is enhanced when the physical infrastructure is considered in partnership with the activity that is happening in that space. Furthermore, considering how these places and activities are governed, sets them up for long-term sustainability. This is how we see the creation of active, vibrant places that are loved and utilised by locals and visitors alike.

To ensure this outcome is achieved in Mackay Waterfront, the actions are arranged into three categories – 'Shape', 'Activate' and 'Manage'.



Fourfold Studio: Proven place experience model.



5. Actions

Everyone has a role to play in activating our City Centre and Waterfront. If you see an action you would like to initiate, support or contribute towards, reach out to the Mackay City and Waterfront team today.

Reading this section

Each action includes a list of champions involved in the delivery, a timeframe, cost and which place themes it supports.

Project duration

This refers to how long the entire project would take including planning, purchasing, organising and delivery, rather than a timeframe for starting the project. E.g. a 'short' action might only take nine months to plan, procure and deliver, but this does not mean starting it should be prioritised over a 'long' action which could take two years to implement.

Short – less than six months

Medium – six to 12 months

Long – one to two years +

Prioritised actions

Six actions have been identified as priorities due to their relevance to community, alignment with key strategic moves and the existing momentum that surrounds them.

Cost

These actions help us plan for future funding, whether that be via council grants or program budgets, in kind donations, sponsorships, etc. The dollar symbols provide an indication of the approximate budget required.

\$ Micro (up to 20K)

\$\$ Low Cost (20 – 50K)

\$\$\$ Mid-Range Cost (50 – 100K)

\$\$\$\$ High Range Cost (100K+)

Place Themes (refer to page 23)

- Active blue water lifestyle
- Art deco sugartown
- Tropical urban creativity
- Multicultural prosperity



Shape Actions

#	Action name / description	Champions	Project duration	Cost	Place Themes
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Connect the City Centre to the Riverside via Wood Street

PRIORITY

S1

Why It's Needed:

With Sydney Street being a busy main road, Wood Street needs to provide the clear pedestrian and active travel route between the City Centre and Riverside. Currently however, the northern end of the street feels disconnected due to land uses, blank facades on commercial tenancies and poor pedestrian connectivity.

Council, businesses on Wood Street with public frontages, businesses and landowners on Seventh Lane

Short

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- Nighttime creative lighting in the trees on the river to strengthen the destination anchor.
- Continue activating Seventh Lane for example with solar-powered festoon lighting and streamlined events process.
- Introduce new public art in the north of Wood Street, between Victoria and River Streets.
- Use creative lighting or similar on the Telstra building to create a nighttime landmark arrival.
- Prioritise this area for maintenance, clean ups and plant care including at River Street.
- Signpost the route to the river via Wood Street – this could be creative wayfinding showing the short distance through eye-catching wayfinding signage, non-slip vinyl decals or urban art interventions.
- Consider façade improvements and greening at the northern end of Wood Street to improve amenity and encourage pedestrians to choose this route.

Improve the appeal of the Riverside Precinct

PRIORITY

S2

Why It's Needed:

Over two thirds of people engaged to inform this strategy have indicated a desire for a more appealing riverside area. Current challenges include the prevalence of concrete, weather and sun exposure, large expanses of unused land and inactive street edges.

Council, Riverside Precinct stakeholders

Short

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- Reflecting the ultimate vision of the public realm Master Plan concept, install a temporary placemaking intervention that trials responses to the key challenges listed above, for example a shipping container pod with surrounding seating and shade. The pod should offer short-term leases to tenants who will attract footfall e.g. fish and chips, or coffee operators / arts organisations etc. This project should include existing riverside stakeholders as key partners.

Improve thermal comfort and shade by enhancing the tropical garden experience

S3

Why It's Needed:

A core concern revealed through the engagement process is the impacts of heat in the Riverside and City Centre areas and the corresponding lack of shade trees in most areas popular with pedestrians. Shade trees take time to grow and planting isn't possible on all footpaths, but there are still plenty of opportunities for increased planting. Mackay has an opportunity to establish its identity as a centre for tropical Art Deco in the north, and this should be driven in line with the existing Urban Greening Strategy.

Council, council Parks team, Executive Team and business owners

Short

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- Internal workshop to identify priority improvements to planting (e.g. irrigation).
- Install a temporary activation including trees, seating and creative lighting. This should be installed next to businesses that can take advantage of additional seating. If possible, install simple movement sensors with the activation to generate usage data to inform longer-term decision-making. Engage with the public and businesses during the trial.
- Resource and accelerate the roll out of the Mackay Urban Greening Strategy.
- Trial greening activities/strategies such as planter boxes in areas where there are no street trees in connecting areas.
- Create a 'Greening the Streets' toolkit for businesses and landowners demonstrating low cost ways to green shop fronts and walkways.



#	Action name / description	Champions	Project duration	Cost	Place Themes
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Support those sleeping rough and improve perceptions of public safety

S4	Why It's Needed: When asked about the riverside, one of the first topics community raises is people sleeping rough in the area and a perception of a lack of safety. There are many organisations in Mackay working to support those experiencing homelessness or substance abuse issues and this is a challenge beyond the scope of this strategy. However, there are a few simple actions that can support the needs of this community.	Council Parks team, Social Outreach Community Groups	Short	\$				
	• <u>Install charging stations and lockers in strategic locations</u> at the Riverside and City Centre (e.g. at Dudley Denney City Library). • <u>Increase access to sharps disposal units</u> in places where sharps are found. • <u>Notify those sleeping in a public area in advance of events</u>, as key users of public space. • <u>Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Rough Sleepers Support Network</u> to facilitate information sharing between organisations and ensure a strategic approach to identifying solvable and preventable issues. This should consider including representatives from Chances House, Orange Sky, Street Chaplaincy, Police, council, support workers, those with lived experience and any other local outreach organisations.							

Create active recreation spaces for kids and young people

S5	Why It's Needed: Assets for young people such as playgrounds are dispersed across Mackay. The Riverside and City Centre areas don't have public options that cater specifically to teenagers, nor any usable playgrounds. Engagement with young people has indicated a desire for places that encourage physical activities such as skateboarding, scooter riding and BMX.	Council, local high schools	Short	\$\$	●	●		
	• <u>Partner with owners of unused public space for temporary youth-focused installations</u>. Unused spaces can be turned into youth recreation areas with just street art and temporary skate infrastructure. • <u>Test and trial further low-cost initiatives for youth</u> aligned with the Mackay Waterfront Master Plan and use these initiatives to form a business case for more permanent infrastructure. • <u>Test and trial a temporary playground in the Riverside area</u> as part of the Bluewater Quay activation. This could be a creative response involving scaffolding, climbing structures, areas for hiding and exploration using a range of everyday or recycled objects. Collaborate with a local arts group for creative embellishments. Use this to gather data to inform longer-term investment from council or partners in the riverside.							

Support Mackay's public art scene to flourish

S6	Why It's Needed: The laneway public art collection in the City Centre is extensive and extraordinary, and the city continues to build upon this offering. This collection is attracting tourists, particularly young people, to stop in Mackay to see the laneway art collection. This is a source of tourism that can be expanded upon.	Mackay City Heart Collective, Artspace Mackay, Artists Connect, Crossroad Arts, Internal Arts Development Team, Mackay Isaac Tourism	Short	\$\$			●	
	• <u>Directly support, encourage and fund community groups who are engaged with street art programs</u>. • <u>Increase resourcing of public arts position(s) within council</u> to maximise benefits of this tourism opportunity. • <u>Improve awareness of the economic and social benefits of public art</u> within council and ensure public art is considered early in project planning rather than as an afterthought. • <u>Explore the feasibility of starting a Mackay Street Art Festival</u> to build capacity in this area, create an additional tourism draw, generate civic pride and expedite the process of creating more public art.							



#	Action name / description	Champions	Project duration	Cost	Place Themes
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Clean up the bus shelter on Gregory Street

S7	Why It's Needed: Often this location is the drop-off point for commuters into Mackay, the area feels unsafe, unclean and is poorly lit at night. It contributes to a sense of decline in the City Centre.	Council, DTMR, landowner, arts groups	Short	\$\$					
	• <u>Invest in maintenance, cleaning, basic lighting and painting.</u> • <u>Engage with owners of the building opposite to explore facade improvement</u> using local artists, window vinyl or similar approaches.								

Encourage Caneland shoppers to visit the City Centre's independent retailers

S8	Why It's Needed: Caneland Shopping Centre has greatly impacted the way locals use the city, drawing people away from the centre. Car travel to and from Canelands offers an opportunity to highlight the proximity of the City Centre area and what it has to offer. The city's boutique shops, nighttime entertainment and food offerings differentiate the City Centre making it an attractive lifestyle and entertainment destination, distinctly different to what's on offer at Canelands.	Council, City Centre businesses, Mackay Region Chamber of Commerce	Medium	\$\$				
	• <u>Develop a Mackay 'shop local' campaign</u> with brochure, footpath decals etc. celebrating and signposting the wide variety of independent retail and food and beverage outlets in the City Centre. • <u>Develop a signage campaign focused on capturing the interests of people driving nearby to the City Centre.</u>							

Improve access for RVs in the City Centre

S9	Why It's Needed: Places for RVs to park encourage visitation which is a form of activation. By locating RV parking in areas which cater to the needs of these visitors we create activation through dwell time and movement on foot. As mentioned earlier, building a tourism focus on the downtown area is an opportunity worth building on.	Council, Mackay Isaac Tourism	Medium	\$					
	• <u>Test and trial adapting existing car parking spaces and other areas into temporary RV parking</u>, in line with the RV Strategy. Do this in places with offerings such as food, coffee, tourist information or walking pathways. • <u>Gather data on the uptake and impact on surrounding businesses</u> to inform longer term permanent change and investment.								



Activate Actions

#	Action name / description	Champions	Time to deliver	Cost	Place Themes
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Celebrate Mackay's multicultural heritage by using public space to tell stories

	Why It's Needed: The community is very proud of the diversity of Mackay, and particularly stories of people coming from all over the world to build a better, prosperous life in the city. This migration story can be shared within the public realm, and the creative talents of Mackay's existing multicultural community are better amplified.	Council, local cultural organisations, local businesses, Arts Development Officer, RADF program	Long	\$\$\$\$							
A1	- Engage with local custodians of cultural knowledge and history to create a Mackay story bank. - Find ways to creatively share these stories in temporary or permanent installations through trails, artworks, integrated quotes, sound trails, creative lighting etc. - Use the Arts and Culture Strategy goals and objectives to guide and fund events that celebrate Mackay's multicultural communities. - Continue to roll out the Mackay Waterfront Signage and Wayfinding Strategy while working collaboratively with the Arts and Culture Strategy to bring specific focus to content that sheds light on Mackay's First Nations and multicultural history.										

Increase representation of First Nations and Australian South Sea Islander communities in the public realm

	Why It's Needed: Mackay has a large representation of First Nations and Australian South Sea Islanders, but this isn't reflected in public space. There is a huge breadth of creativity and important opportunities for storytelling that can contribute to Mackay's strength as a multicultural, creative city. This is in line with action M4 in the 'manage' section.	Council, local cultural organisations, local arts organisations	Long	\$							
A2	- Collaborate with First Nations and Australian South Sea Islander communities to record local heritage and narratives including truth-telling the story of 'blackbirding' in our region (the practice of coercing or kidnapping people, particularly from the South Sea Islands, to work as labourers during the 19th and early 20th centuries). - Extend this collaboration by creating opportunities to tell these stories in the public realm through public art and interpretive signage. - Ensure First Nations businesses and community members are invited to take part in and benefit from public events and activations. - Create opportunities for cultural heritage awareness and education in the public realm and consider aligned commercial opportunities for these groups.										

Improve amenity and activity to make walking attractive in the City Centre

PRIORITY

	Why It's Needed: The City Centre has a diversity of successful local businesses and is visited by many every day, however thermal comfort is a challenge, and people are in the habit of driving between destinations even if they are only a few minutes' walk. City Centre businesses can benefit from increased pedestrian traffic, so a concerted effort is needed to get people out of their cars and onto the streets.	Council, local businesses with street frontage	Medium	\$\$							
A3	- Increase street greening and planting in line with the MRC Greening Strategy and Mackay Waterfront Master Plan to enhance Mackay's tropical feel and increase shade provision. - Increase provision of other shade structures and cooling devices in Wood Street and Victoria Street. - Encourage busking with free permits in designated areas such as around the Victoria Street roundabout.										



PRIORITY

A4

A5

Activate or screen empty commercial tenancies

A6

#	Action name / description	Champions	Time to deliver	Cost	Place Themes
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Position the Riverside as an urban playground for sports and recreation

A7	Why It's Needed: Community described the City Centre as their destination for shopping and entertainment and expressed a desire to see the riverside as a recreational space like many other cities. In the long term with significant further development, the goal is for the riverside to become an extension of the City Centre's food and beverage scene, but in the meantime, it can earn a reputation as a destination for active recreation.	Council, riverside stakeholders, riverside businesses, local organisations	Long	\$\$	●			
	• <u>Bolster and enhance existing sports and fitness events and provision</u> – e.g. existing walking and cycling trails, free stationary bikes instead of standard seats and riverside fitness classes. • <u>Add new events and activations related to sport and exercise</u> such as boot camps, soccer skills sessions, a riverside Park Run, 'sports day' events etc. • <u>Host public screenings of big sporting events</u> such as State of Origin at Bluewater Quay. • <u>Consider a temporary splash pad / sand pit in summer</u> to extend existing waterplay offering, or a temporary sand pit. • <u>Host pop-up sports equipment</u> such as pickleball, basketball, volleyball, badminton or simply table tennis and corn hole.							

Improve amenity and increase activity at Bluewater Quay

A8	Why It's Needed: Bluewater Quay presents an incredible opportunity as Mackay's riverside public space, but currently shade and seating are limited, and the space is dominated by concrete. By reducing the expanse of concrete and bringing in activity, this space can start to become the riverside recreation experience that the community want.	Council, riverside stakeholders, riverside businesses, local organisations	Medium	\$\$\$	●	●		
	• <u>Colour and green the flood wall to reduce the visible expanse of concrete</u> and better reflect Mackay's tropical identity. • <u>Ensure year-round regular programming of this space</u>, either as it is or including the pop-up hub recommended in action S2. • <u>Consider temporary installation of planting, shade structures and seating</u> to activate the area and support surrounding businesses by increasing dwell time. • <u>Support Red Dog Brewery and Endless Days</u> to expand and diversify their offerings, as the riverside's current active stakeholders.							

Support local businesses to bring the blue water river to life

A9	Why It's Needed: The river is Mackay's greatest natural feature and has not reached its potential as a recreational asset and tourism draw. This is largely due to its unsuitability for most water sports, and challenges around cruises due to the large tidal fluctuations. However, there are plenty of other ways to help locals connect with their river.	Council, riverside stakeholders, riverside businesses, local organisations	Medium	\$	●			
	• <u>Explore the possibility of supporting local businesses to offer activities focused on the water</u>, such as: • Jet ski tours from the pontoon. • Fishing skills sessions on the pontoon. • Events encouraging people to pull up tinnies to the pontoon – this gets people out on the river and provides a spectacle for viewers on the riverside. • Riverine wildlife spotting tours along the riverside and riverine environmental education.							



Manage Actions

#	Action name / description	Champions	Time to deliver	Cost	Place Themes
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Develop a plan for activation of the Riverside Precinct

PRIORITY	M1	Why It's Needed: This area has its own unique challenges and opportunities and as such requires a focused approach, bringing together relevant stakeholders around a shared vision (refer to page 16).	Council, Riverside Precinct stakeholders	Medium	\$	●				
		• <u>Work with major stakeholders to develop a refreshed public realm Master Plan concept for the Riverside Precinct (Bluewater Quay to the River Wharves)</u> drawing on community engagement insights to date. This is to guide future private sector investment and prepare for potential State and Federal grants for major public realm upgrades. • <u>Develop an implementation plan for actions that can be addressed in a 1 – 3 year period to bring the vision for the Riverside Precinct to life</u> (even if this is in a temporary format – refer to S2).								

Consider management models for sustainable Riverside Precinct activation

PRIORITY	M2	Why It's Needed: Without a clear governance structure and dedicated funding, activation efforts can be inconsistent and financially unsustainable. Engaging stakeholders in a structured model allows for shared investment—whether through direct funding, in-kind support, program delivery, or promotional efforts—ensuring a coordinated and strategic approach to precinct activation.	Council, riverside stakeholders	Long	\$	●				
		• <u>Engage key stakeholders to assess their interest in formal or informal collaborations</u> with clear roles and processes. Ensure the model delivers mutual benefits for all involved, including traders, local organisations, and the council. • <u>Investigate options for funding</u> – There are many different examples. Explore a mix of funding sources, including financial contributions, grants, sponsorships, and in-kind support. • <u>Encourage diverse stakeholder contributions</u> – identify various ways stakeholders can contribute beyond financial support, such as program delivery, marketing, or logistical support. Consider incentives or recognition programs to encourage ongoing engagement and investment.								

Encourage owners of empty tenancies to improve facades

PRIORITY	M3	Why It's Needed: Dilapidated buildings cause enormous harm to people's perceptions of a city. Decay and blight sends a message that the town is in decline, even if that is not true. Urban decay in the project area is probably the single biggest issue in the minds of the community. Mackay has an opportunity to lead the way in Australia through creative ways of addressing this, whilst demonstrating to locals that council is committed to improving Mackay for everyone. Please see action A6 for temporary activation recommendations.	Council, landowners	Medium	\$\$	●				
		Case studies around the world demonstrate the effectiveness of the two actions recommended below: • <u>Continue to improve building facades through Mackay's Facade Improvement Program</u> or other creative programs. • <u>Use local laws to create an enforceable obligation on landowners to register untenanted buildings and bring the facade of their buildings up to an acceptable state of repair.</u>								



#	Action name / description	Champions	Time to deliver	Cost	Place Themes
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Encourage the private sector to be a part of placemaking

M4	Why It's Needed: When the private sector helps shape public spaces it can speed up renewal, support local organisations and increase financial sustainability. Other places around the world have successfully introduced placemaking mandates for private developers, with the incentive that this helps developers to build social licence and a positive local reputation as well as increasing property values.	Council, private developers	Long	\$						
	- Identify key vacant blocks of land currently detracting from street vibrancy. - Work with landowners to investigate opportunities to temporarily activate these spaces prior to their development. - Continue to build partnerships between local businesses and community leaders to drive placemaking initiatives linked to the 'Activate' actions outlined in this Strategy.									

Build relationships with First Nations communities

M5	Why It's Needed: The Mackay Region has a higher representation of people from First Nations cultural backgrounds than the Queensland average, with over 7500 people identifying in this way. It is vital that this community is better represented in the public space and the first step towards this is improving relationships. This links with actions listed in A7.	Council, local organisations, Traditional Custodians	Long	\$						
	Actively seek out Traditional Custodians to progress the understanding of deep connections with the riverside with the aim of developing a shared pathway for future healing and ongoing storytelling in public spaces. This should be carried out in line with the Reconciliation Action Plan currently in development.									

Enable Mackay's much-loved community events to flourish

M6	Why It's Needed: Festivals and gatherings, such as the Italian Festival, create vibrant public spaces, are well loved by the community and support local businesses. However, many community groups face significant barriers to hosting events. High costs, complex permit processes and insurance requirements often make it difficult for these events to take place.	Council, local organisations, local venues	Medium	\$\$						
	- Work directly with cultural and community groups to identify funding opportunities, provide financial support, remove barriers and highlight the return on investment for local businesses to encourage collaboration and sponsorships. - Investigate the possibility of creating a central event storage space on the riverside where event managers can quickly and easily access essential items. - Streamline approval processes to make it easier for community groups to host events – investigate the possibility of a framework that allows small groups and individuals to be covered under the Council's public liability insurance, reducing financial burdens and enabling more community-led activations. - Develop user-friendly event management templates to streamline planning and execution and consider creating a public event guide to share knowledge and make the process as simple as possible. - Develop a strong relationship with local police to help to streamline traffic management for smaller events.									



#	Action name / description	Champions	Time to deliver	Cost	Place Themes
Be a public art enabler and innovator					
M7	Why It's Needed: With existing strengths in public art and strong community support, Mackay has a significant opportunity to be an innovator and leader in this space, attracting tourism, creating an attractive public realm, bringing economic benefit and supporting community connection. As it stands, with a strong creative community there is plenty of drive to increase both temporary and permanent public arts, but internal roadblocks hold back progress. As a result of this, even iconic events like Illuminate face challenges and no murals have so far been installed on main roads where they would have the most impact. A few changes to internal systems can unlock this latent potential, allowing Mackay's public art to flourish.	Council, creative community	Medium	\$	● ● ●
	- Streamline public art projects by having a designated 'Public Art Champion' in relevant departments of council. Through a workshop, collaboratively develop an internal public arts approvals protocol including teams from Health and Regulatory Services, Traffic and Investigation, MECC and Festivals and Events and other relevant departments. These nominated Public Art Champions across departments can then become enablers of the growth of Mackay's public arts offering. - Strengthen connections with the creative community – host informal engagement sessions such as morning tea or drop-in meetings to improve accessibility. Clearly communicate the role of council support in facilitating public art initiatives.				

Advocate for private sector investment					
M8	Why It's Needed: Contrary to the past perceptions, Mackay Regional Council is open for business and invites investment and innovative ideas to develop and enhance the City Centre and Riverside. Council recognises the importance of a collaborative, outcome-focused approach to regulatory processes, shifting from an adversarial to a supportive model. Past practices have sometimes been perceived as obstructive, and they aim to change this by pre-lodgement engagement and working together from the outset.	Council	Short	\$	● ● ●
	- Promote and encourage private development in the Mackay Waterfront. - Hold City Scene events at regular intervals. - Produce a concise document to inform investors of the assets and opportunities on offer in the Mackay Waterfront to attract investment to the area. - Share wins, collaborations and efforts council is making in this space more broadly (i.e. at conferences and through the media).				

Create a continual community feedback loop					
M9	Why It's Needed: As the actions outlined in this strategy are carried out, there should be an evaluation process working with stakeholders and community to ensure that they are reaching their intended impact. Actions should be re-prioritised on an annual basis, and impact assessed after every test and trial.	Council, local organisations, local venues	Medium	\$\$	● ● ●
	- Gather data and community feedback for every test or trial carried out in the public realm. Data gathered can then be used to inform future decision-making. - Build evaluation and engagement into the process for any action carried out from this strategy.				





Place Strategy Toolkit

If you're planning an activation or beautification project, use this toolkit to help you understand how to be relevant to our community and to have the greatest positive impact on the City Centre and Riverside precincts.



A) Place Themes

When delivering an action, be sure to consider how it can best contribute to amplifying these place themes. This will help strengthen the image of the city.

01



Active blue water lifestyle

Mackay's outdoor lifestyle is built around its vibrant, Bluewater paradise. Mackay offers an active lifestyle, where the Pioneer River— one of Queensland's few clear blue water rivers—winds from the Clarke Range to the sea. Locals and visitors alike enjoy fishing with family, boating and spotting wildlife in its tidal waters. The river's clean, clear waters reflect the sky, creating a stunning backdrop for running along the shore, cycling along the trails, or simply enjoying some time on the water.

02



Art Deco Sugartown

Mackay is an Art Deco Sugartown, where beautiful heritage buildings tell the story of resilience and prosperity. After cyclones reshaped the city, Art Deco architecture emerged, still standing strong today. Sugar built this town, creating jobs and shaping its identity. From historic mills to modern farming, our agricultural prowess is part of the key to our success.

03



Tropical urban creativity

Mackay is a city of tropical urban creativity, where mangroves and palms meet murals and street art. For a city this size, it boasts an unexpected abundance of urban art, with sculptural installations, creative lighting and yarn bombers transforming public spaces. Inspired by sunshine, water and lush surroundings, local artists, musicians and cultural groups thrive. Under the shade of trees, concrete becomes a canvas and the city bursts at the seams with vibrant, artistic energy.

04



Multicultural prosperity

Our First Nations, Australian South Sea Islander and other culturally diverse communities contribute to Mackay's cultural identity. Mackay thrives on multicultural prosperity, shaped by people from all over the world seeking a better life. Sugarcane farming was the initial draw, other industries evolved and now the city is a melting pot of influences from across the world, expressed through cooking, art and storytelling. Walk the streets and experience global flavours and cultural festivals. Ask locals and they'll tell you—diversity is one of Mackay's greatest strengths.



B) Users – Current

These four fictional user profiles are based on demographic data and engagement insights. Use them to understand who will benefit from and may help to drive these strategic changes.

The local family



FIFO coal miner Greg (38) lives with health admin worker Leanne (37) and their three young kids. They moved to Mackay for work 10 years ago.

Interests and hobbies:

- Tinnie fishing, camping and the cowboys.
- Saturday night dinner at the pub with friends.
- Soccer and scooters for the kids.

They would go into the City Centre or Riverside if there were things to do with kids. Occasionally, Greg and Leanne go into Wood Street for a date night, but they don't otherwise go into the area as a family.

MORE FOR FAMILIES WITH TEENS

City Centre office worker



Felicity (41), runs a real estate agency for sales and rental management with a team of four. They have off-street parking and leave the city after work.

Interests and hobbies:

- Running and fitness.
- Treating herself to a salon trip.
- Socialising with friends, good food and wine.

Felicity moved from Melbourne and really misses the buzz. If she felt there was more going on, she'd get involved and spend more time in the City Centre – she'd love to organise regular socials for her team.

MORE THINGS TO DO AFTER WORK

The retired couple



Margaret (56) and Paul (59) have lived in Mackay their whole lives, and recently sold their business to retire. Their four grown-up kids have all moved away.

Interests and hobbies:

- Marg loves painting and Paul is an avid gardener.
- Rotary members supporting their community.
- Foodies who love a fun event or festival.

They love getting Thai or Greek food in the city, and Margaret sometimes heads in to shop for gifts. They'd love to spend more time by the river but it doesn't offer much for them, and doesn't always feel safe.

SAFER, MORE ATTRACTIVE

The nature lover



Mining admin worker Sam (39) was born in Vanuatu and moved over as a kid, having family here after her grandfather was brought here to work on a sugar farm.

- She has a camper van for exploring NQ whenever she can – bushwalks, waterfalls and the reef.
- She has a big family who love to get together for celebrations in Queens Park or at the beach.

Sam isn't a fan of the City Centre or Riverside, they're too hot, and without the greenery that she loves. She's adventurous and would be up for trying new things, but there never seems to be much that interests her.

GREENER, BETTER MARKETING

Image credit: Graham Crumb/Imagicity.com



B) Users – Future

The below fictional user profiles are people that could be attracted to new opportunities in a changing City Centre and Riverside.

Young tourists



These 23-year-old Brits are traveling Aus after uni. They're keen to see as much of NQ as they can and to spend their travel savings on a good time.

Interests and hobbies:

- They're up for fun and interesting things, cool art, places to eat, drink and party. They like LGBTQ-friendly places, festivals, markets and live music.

Mackay is a good base but one night in town will be enough. If there was a market or event at Riverside while they're here they'd definitely go. Mackay doesn't feel like a place they can explore on foot.

LIVE MUSIC, EVENTS, LANEWAY ART

Grey nomads



Jenny (63) and Tony (67) recently retired and are heading around Australia in their new Toyota. Tony was an engineer and Jenny worked as a teacher.

Interests and hobbies:

- Getting to know new places with cultural experiences and walkable neighbourhoods.
- Galleries, getting nice gifts for the family.

Mackay wasn't on their radar until Tony read about fishing charters to the reef. He'd like to stay longer but Jenny doesn't feel there's much for her to do. She'd like to feel more connected to the city.

CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Young families



Rob (40) and Erin (37) moved from Sydney for housing affordability and good school options for their young kids. Tony plans to renovate their new four-bed place.

Interests and hobbies:

- Always looking for ways to entertain the kids.
- Rob loves NRL, hunting and a cold beer.
- Erin loves spin classes with a social coffee after.

Erin mainly goes in for her gym and coffee, Rob sometimes meets mates at one of the pubs on the weekend, but there's not much to offer them as a whole family. It's too hot and not enough play options.

MORE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Young workers



Tom is 23 and single and just moved up to start out a career in the mines. He rents his uncle's granny flat so he pays below market rent and can grow his savings.

- Tom likes the outdoors 4WD, fishing, camping and motorbike riding.
- He likes the pubs in the city, meets mates for a couple of beers some weekends but hates having to wait in lines to get a cab home after.

He already spends some time in the City Centre, and is a great candidate for spending more time and money there. The key for him is more socialising opportunities like live music, pub options and sports events.

LIVE MUSIC, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES



C) Activation Strategy Stages

Stuck for ideas? Use this section to help you understand what action is most relevant for your particular situation and context.



Precinct Key Moves

Be mindful that there are different **opportunities and challenges** across the Mackay City Centre and Riverside Precincts:

City Centre

-  Lots of businesses / stakeholders to work with.
-  Motivated Chamber, businesses and community groups.
-  Good bones (art deco, art, laneways, placemaking, some limited sections of greenery).
-  Long standing vacant land and vacant tenancies.
-  Spread out – most of the vibrancy is centered on Wood and Victoria but some gems are out further.
-  Hot walking to and from the City Centre.

Riverside

-  The waterfront provides amenity and cooling breezes.
-  The community aspires to see this place as a destination.
-  Future private development alignment.
-  Heavy use of concrete, hot and unattractive, limited greenery.
-  Limited stakeholders in the area to support activation.
-  Empty vacant lots add to the sense of incompleteness and are unattractive.
-  Flood levy wall divides spaces.
-  A long space which would benefit from multiple nodes of activity.



CITY CENTRE PRECINCT

1. Connect the City Centre to the waterfront via Wood Street.
2. Enhance City Centre gateways and heart.
3. Activate City Centre public spaces, laneways and alleyways (Wood Street Park, Fifth Lane).
4. Encourage innovative street art.
5. Promote 'Mackay local' business offerings.

RIVERSIDE PRECINCT

8. Tell place-based history of the waterfront (including First Nations).
9. Deliver short term 'incubator' activation to support regular events, programs and activities (concentrate the energy).
8. Pursue active recreation opportunities.
9. Collaborate with Riverside Precinct stakeholders to drive activation of public realm.
10. Attract families to the Riverside Precinct.



The Riverside and City Centre precincts are in very different stages. The City Centre is 'mature' but ready for a refresh. Riverside is still in its 'before and during construction' phase.

A staged activation approach is best suited for the Riverside Precinct—one that is purposeful, curated and deeply intentional. Think of it as growing a garden. You have the vision (blooming garden). You are building a complex system, layered with diverse users, drivers and uses, each one dependent on care and attention. Every flower in this garden represents an activity, event or experience that helps the place thrive. And just like any thriving ecosystem, it starts with planting the seed.

Before and during construction | The start up cycle

The seed...

The seed begins small: a temporary coffee pod and a creative workshop space, elements that can be drawn from the long term vision. These initial moves build awareness of the precinct, test ideas and begin forming early partnerships.

...sprouts...

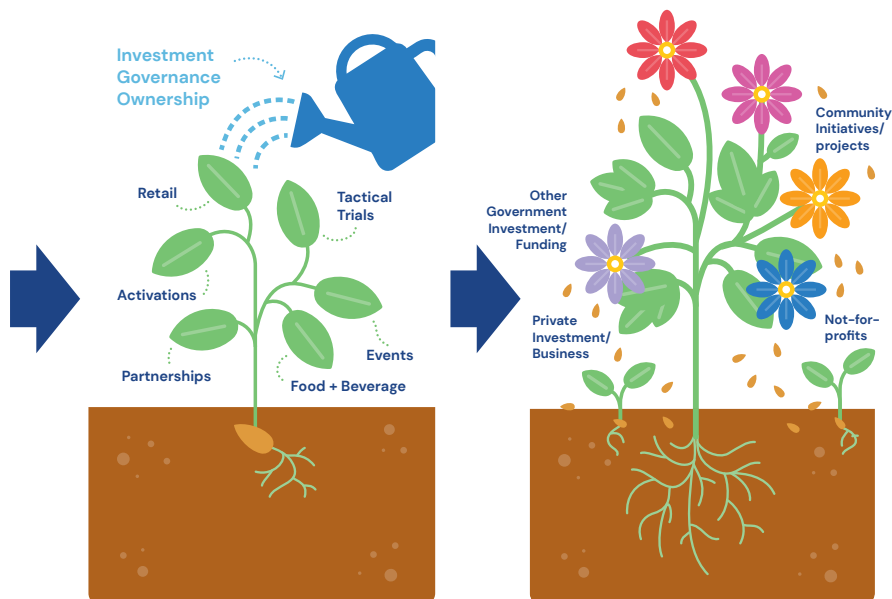
From here, the garden starts to grow. Investment and nurturing allow the place to adapt. What works will take off—what doesn't can evolve. The coffee shop connects with creative businesses, adding art to its walls and offering an indoor-outdoor sales front. Programs delivered in collaboration with youth groups fill the space with life. The neighbouring cafe operator contributes by hosting Sunday live music on the lawn.

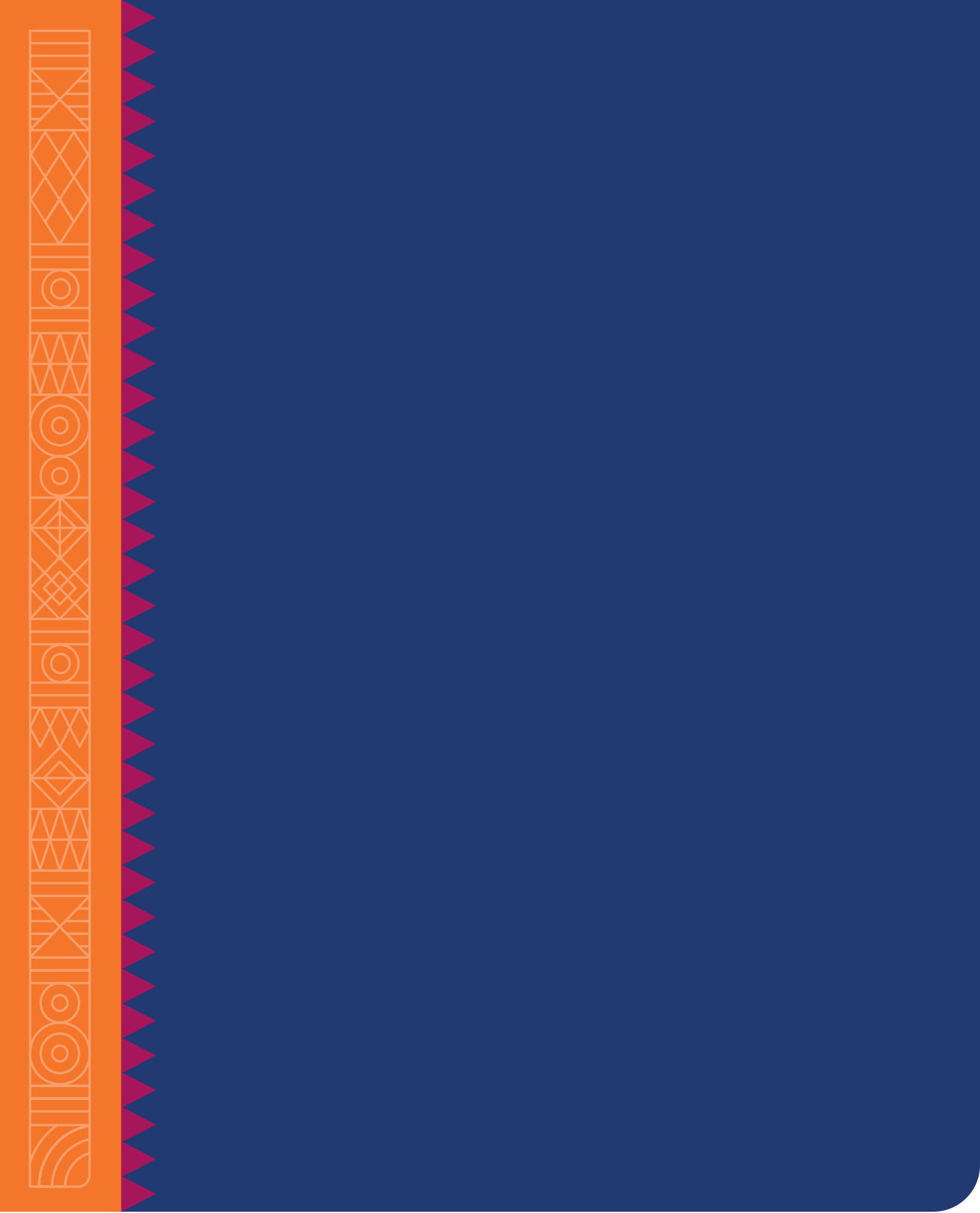
Eventually, successful elements begin to self-seed, drawing their own audiences and generating momentum. But creating vibrant, well-activated spaces is an iterative process—it demands constant reassessment, reevaluation and care. It's about doing, not just saying. Hoarding signs and slick marketing language mean nothing without real demonstration. Actions are what unlock investment and establish a true sense of place—even in a transient, ever-shifting environment.

You have a vision and have done the planning. But how do you get there?

Plant the seed.
A reflection of the
long term vision.

...then flowers.





The Mackay Waterfront Place Strategy was developed with the support of the Queensland Government in association with Mackay Regional Council.

