



Western Sydney Neighbourhoods

Urban Design Guidance

ARUP

WESTERN SYDNEY
PLANNING
PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

As Western Sydney continues to experience rapid population growth, the need for accessible, inclusive, healthy, and sustainable neighbourhoods has never been more urgent. The **Western Sydney Neighbourhoods Urban Design Guidance** has been developed to create walkable, liveable neighbourhoods anchored by vibrant, diverse, and activated neighbourhood centres. These centres play a crucial role in shaping community life by providing convenient access to essential services, retail, public spaces, and social infrastructure—all within a 15-minute walk or cycle from residents' homes.

This strategy builds upon the findings of the **Western Sydney Neighbourhoods Project**, developed by Arup for the Western Sydney Planning Partnership (WSPP) and takes into consideration the Western Sydney Street Design Guidelines prepared by WSPP. It provides a tailored framework for 15-minute neighbourhood outcomes that are uniquely suited to the needs of Western Sydney's diverse communities. The urban design strategies outlined in this report are based on extensive research, analysing both established and emerging neighbourhood centres across the region. These insights have informed recommendations on how to enhance the quality, importance, and role of neighbourhood centres in delivering long-term liveability and social resilience.

In the context of this strategy, **neighbourhood centres** refer to local hubs that provide essential goods, services, and community facilities, enabling residents to meet their daily needs within a short walk or bike ride. Unlike **high-order centres**, which typically serve broader regions with larger-scale commercial and transport infrastructure, neighbourhood centres are more intimate, community-focused spaces that support daily life and foster social connections.

Through this strategy, guidance is provided on how to strengthen the role of neighbourhood centres, ensuring they are equipped to accommodate future growth while maintaining a human scale that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists. This is intended to guide all stakeholders involved in neighbourhood planning and design in Western Sydney: developers, landowners, consultants and local and state government.

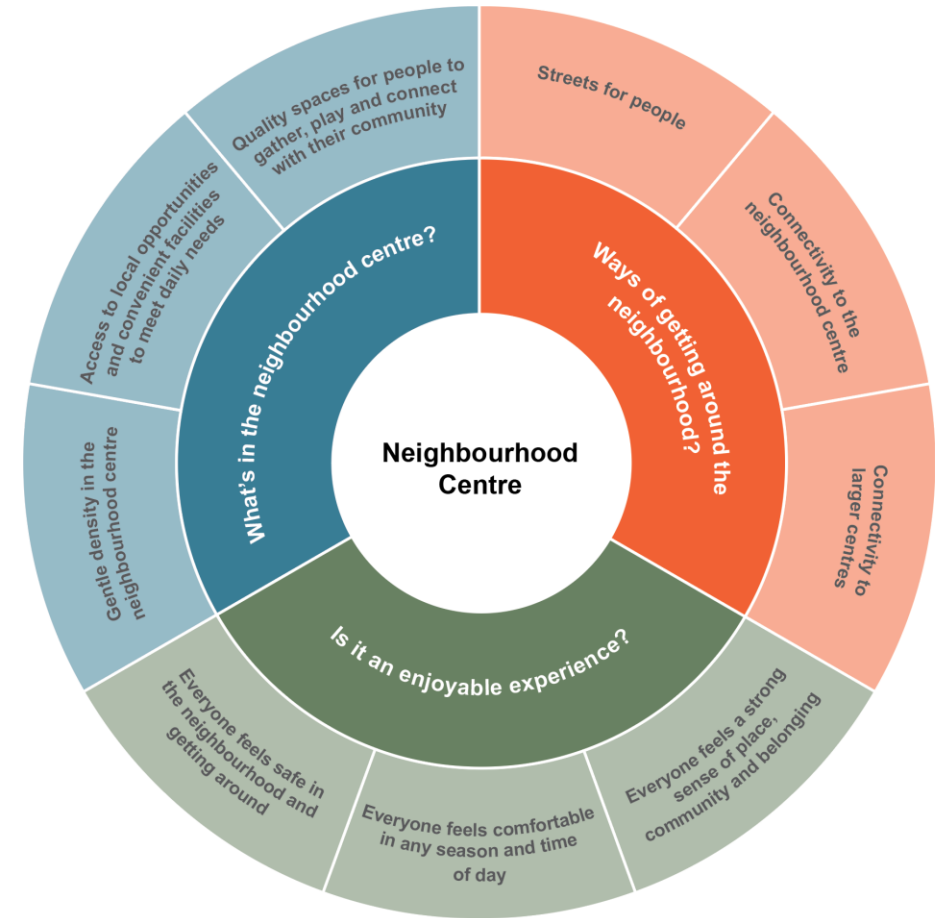


The framework on a page

VISION

Every resident in Western Sydney has safe, comfortable and easy access to the places that make a thriving and liveable neighbourhood.

The vision of the **Western Sydney Neighbourhoods Urban Design Guidance** is broken down into three key dimensions: **what's in the neighbourhood centre**, **ways of getting around the neighbourhood**, and **the quality of the experience**. Each dimension is supported by a series of objectives, focusing on promoting gentle density, ensuring access to local opportunities, and enhancing connectivity, safety, and community engagement.



Urban design principles and strategies

The following section outlines the urban design principles and strategies, derived from the established **15-minute Neighbourhood Framework** objectives.

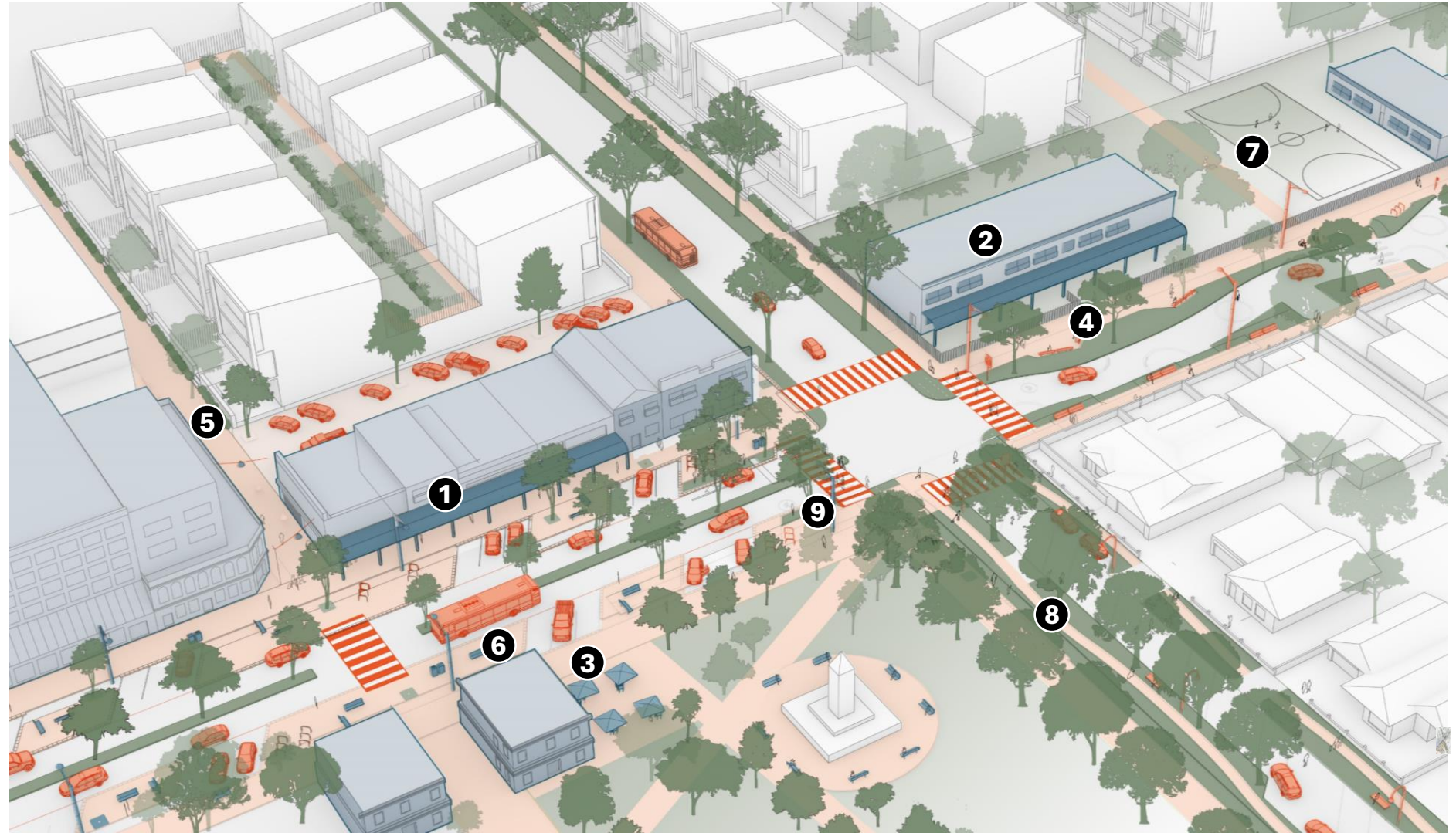
The **Western Sydney Neighbourhoods Design Guidance** urban design principles directly respond to the vision framework, providing a clear guide for the design and planning of neighbourhoods in Western Sydney. To support these principles, a number of urban design strategies have been identified, ensuring that the unique contextual needs of each neighbourhood are carefully considered through the planning and design process.

The design principles outlined here are designed to target small scale intervention in response to localised challenges facing successful place-based outcomes in Western Sydney. The following images and visualisations represent a generic neighbourhood centre for reference only, they are not place specific in nature.

	Objectives	Urban Design Principles
What's in the neighbourhood centre?	Gentle density in the neighbourhood centre	Built form frontages to main streets, neighbourhood centres, and public open spaces are fine grain and provide active frontages.
	Access to local opportunities and convenient facilities to meet daily needs	Provide a network of centres, distributed to minimise gaps within the walking catchment, that supports a mix of uses.
	Quality spaces for people to gather, play and connect with their community	Design of public space and built form to complement, activate and enhance one another.
Ways of getting around the neighbourhood?	Streets for people	Streets are places for passive recreation where active transport is prioritised and encouraged
	Connectivity to the neighbourhood centre	Pedestrian and cycling network should be more permeable and connected than vehicle network
	Connectivity to larger centres	Public transport nodes should connect centres
Is it an enjoyable experience?	Everyone feels a strong sense of place, community and belonging	Neighbourhood development is balanced with public spaces, including streets, that are diverse and activated
	Everyone feels comfortable in any season and time of day	Green infrastructure and built form enhance environmental conditions
	Everyone feels safe in the neighbourhood and getting around	Neighbourhood feels safe through out the day and into the evening, with good lighting, sightlines and surveillance

Urban design principles

- 1 Built form frontages to main streets, neighbourhood centres, and public open spaces are fine grain and provide active frontages.
- 2 Provide a network of centres, distributed to minimise gaps within the walking catchment, that supports a mix of uses.
- 3 Design of public space and built form to complement, activate and enhance one another.
- 4 Streets are places for passive recreation where active transport is prioritised and encouraged
- 5 Pedestrian and cycling network should be more permeable and connected than vehicle network
- 6 Public transport nodes should connect centres
- 7 Neighbourhood development is balanced with public spaces, including streets, that are diverse and activated
- 8 Green infrastructure and built form enhance environmental conditions
- 9 Neighbourhood feels safe through out the day and into the evening, with good lighting, sightlines and surveillance



Urban design strategies

1 Built form frontages in neighbourhood centres and public open spaces are fine grain and provide active frontages.

- 1.1 Vary and articulate built form to promote high street models, minimising bulky retail centres.
- 1.2 Provide openings and protrusions such as windows, entries, balconies, awnings, canopies and transparent facades.
- 1.3 Provide varied facade treatments and materials, particularly on larger facades, and reinforce the vertical rhythm of streetscapes.
- 1.4 Maximise active frontages in the neighbourhood centre and focus parking and servicing along rear laneways
- 1.5 Incentivise medium density apartment buildings close to neighbourhood centres.

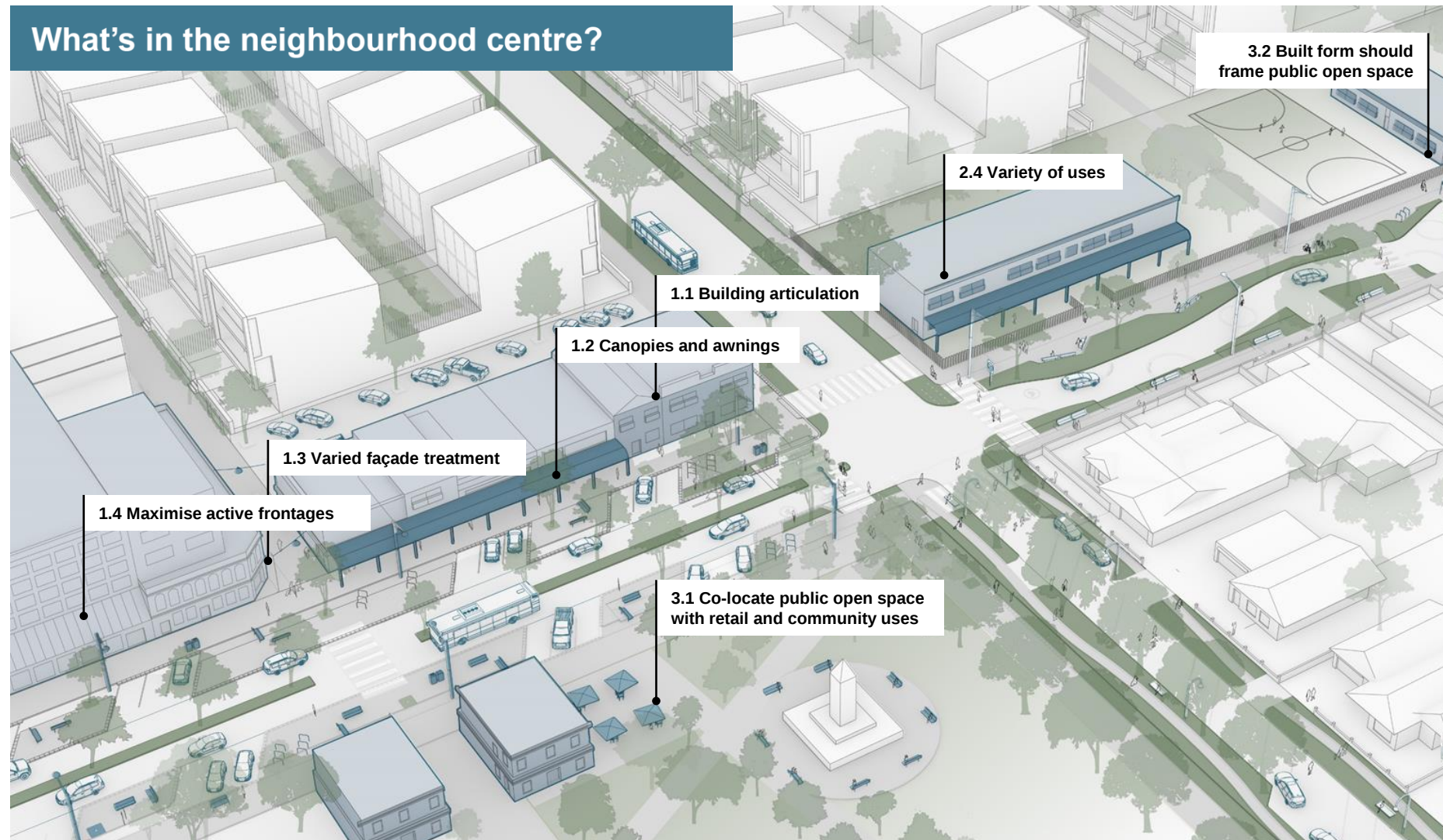
2 Provide a network of centres, distributed to minimise gaps within the walking catchment, that supports a mix of uses.

- 2.1 Provide a network of centres that support compact urban areas.
- 2.2 Deliver a clear hierarchy of activity centres of varying scales and roles.
- 2.3 Distribute centres to minimise gaps between sustainable transport catchments (walking and cycling), and around key transport nodes.
- 2.4 Design lot size and configuration to support intended retail, commercial and mixed-use development

3 Design of public space and built form to complement, activate and enhance one another.

- 3.1 Co-locate public open space with community and retail uses
- 3.2 Built form should frame public space, with appropriate scale and contribute to activation and natural surveillance.
- 3.3 Design public-private interfaces to support the diversity and activation of the public realm.
- 3.4 Use fine-grain non-residential frontages to activate key interfaces, such as main streets and edges to plazas, squares and parks.

What's in the neighbourhood centre?



Urban design strategies

4

Streets are places for passive recreation where active transport is prioritised and encouraged

- 4.1 Local streets have safe, low speed limits.
- 4.2 Inclusion of shared zones through pavement treatment.
- 4.3 Extend footpath at intersections to calm traffic, increase pedestrian waiting space, and reduce traffic speeds at intersections.
- 4.4 Reduce street parking and use permeable paving.
- 4.5 Within Neighbourhood Centres, raise crossings to provide continuous footpaths and priority for pedestrians.
- 4.6 Parking lots are on the periphery of the neighborhood centre.
- 4.7 Provide setbacks that support green cover and tree canopy.
- 4.8 Scale rear or front setbacks to cater for deep soil where appropriate to support mature trees.

5

Pedestrian and cycling network should be more permeable and connected than vehicle network

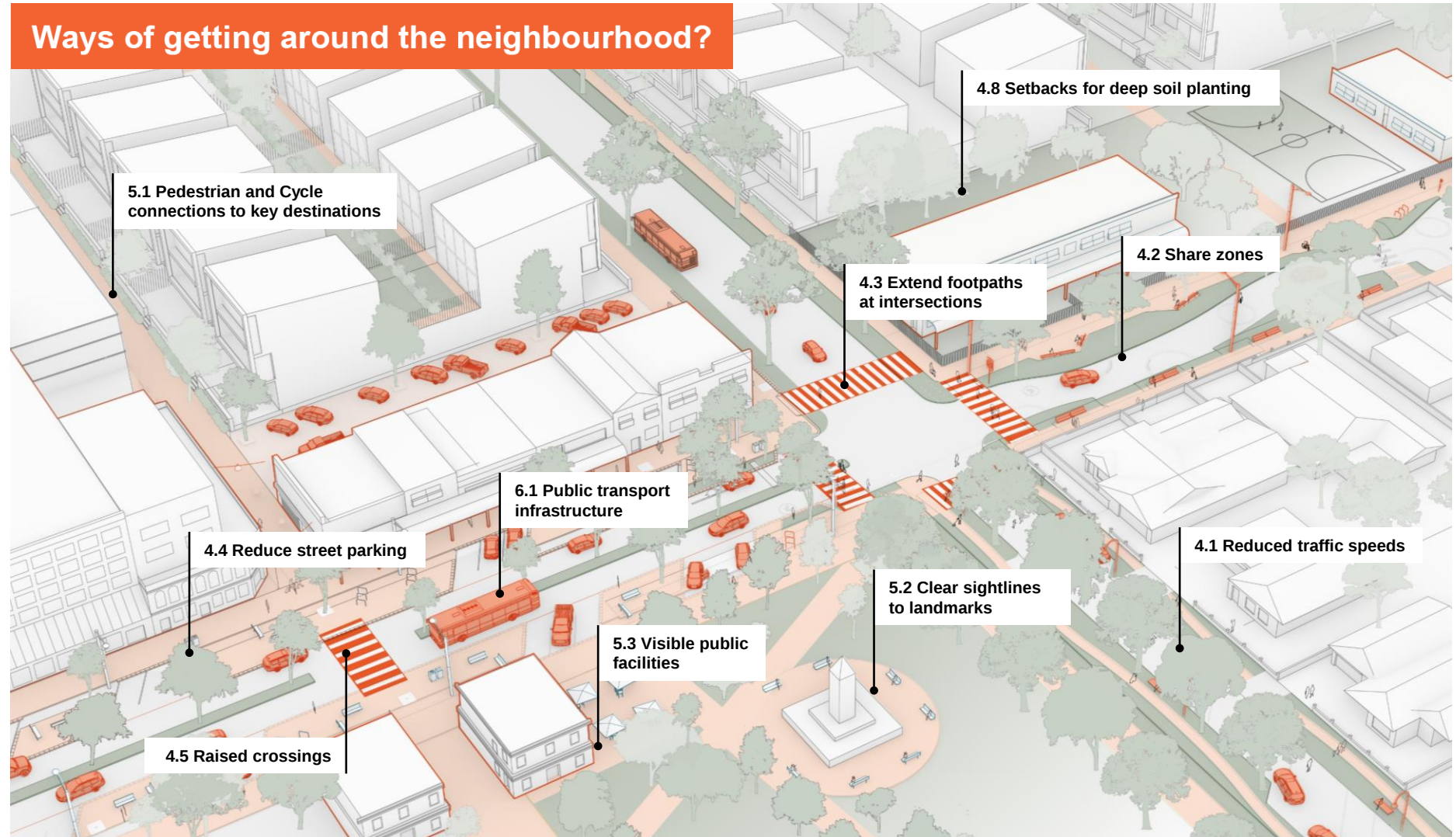
- 5.1 Create local cycle and pedestrian connections between key destinations such as parks, urban centres, community uses, waterways, bushland, and ecological areas.
- 5.2 Support wayfinding by providing clear sightlines to place features such as waterways, public open spaces, landmarks, and civic built form.
- 5.3 Make public facilities visible from the street, with clear and legible entries.
- 5.4 Make public facilities visible in community spaces.
- 5.5 Design fine grain movement networks which provide opportunities for active transport in local neighbourhoods.

6

Public transport nodes should connect centres

- 6.1 Neighbourhood centres should integrate active transport and public transport infrastructure, including bike parking, public transport connections and shelters and seating.
- 6.2 Signage and wayfinding should encourage public transport and active transport use.
- 6.3 Consider how public transport nodes and stops are located in relation to neighbourhood centres to strengthen local movement networks.

Ways of getting around the neighbourhood?



Urban design strategies

7 Neighbourhood development is balanced with public spaces, including streets, that are diverse and activated

- 7.1 Provide for various uses, types, and settings to create variety, activity, and interest within a neighbourhood.
- 7.2 Design neighbourhood centres with a mix of public spaces to be inclusive and diverse, fostering a sense of ownership, encouraging physical activity, and supporting social interaction.
- 7.3 Sufficient 'dwell space' is provided for activities, pedestrians, landscape, and buffers in accordance with the local council requirements or as set out in the Walking Space Guide (TfNSW 2020).

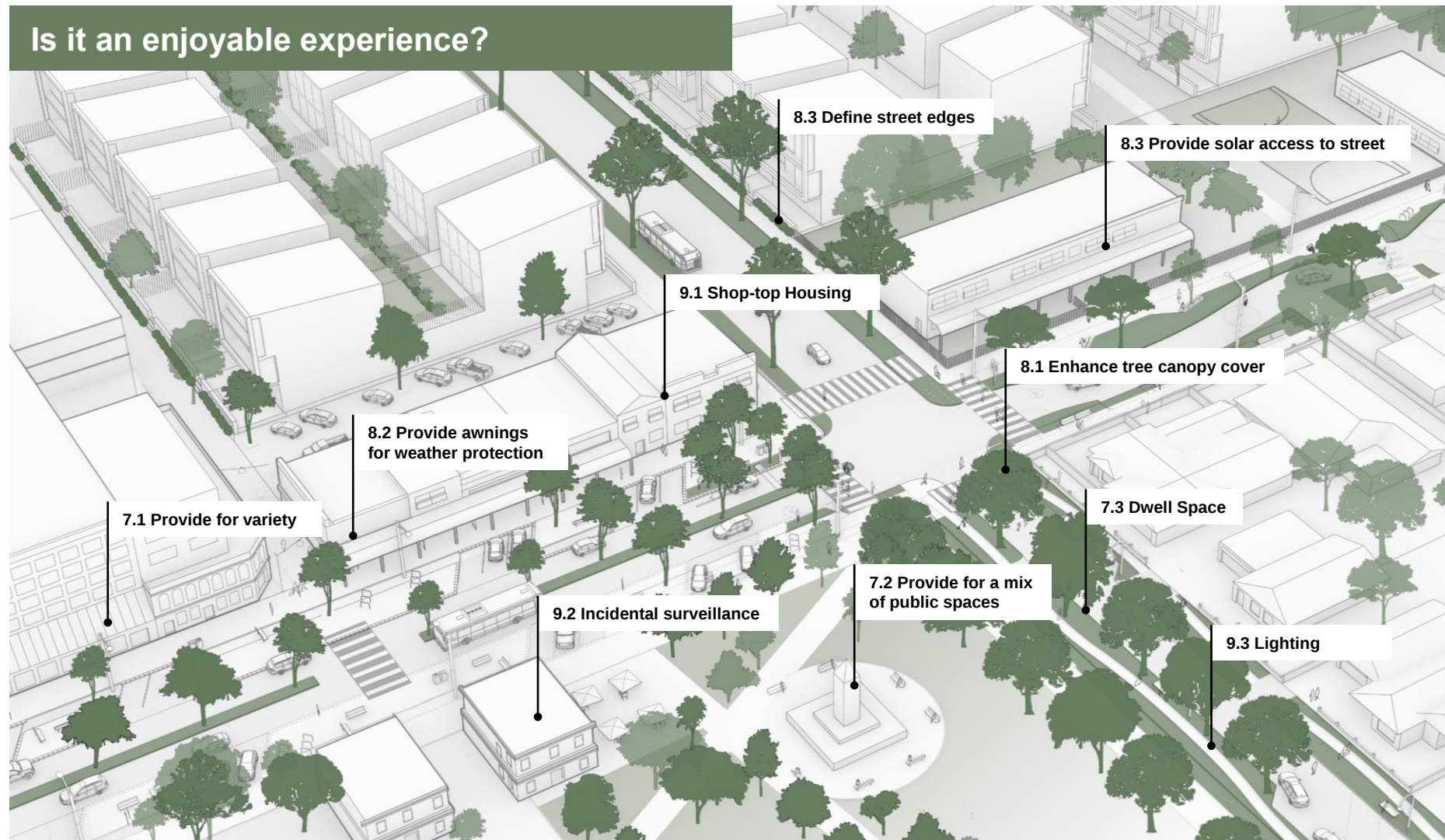
8 Green infrastructure and built form enhance comfort and protect from adverse climate conditions

- 8.1 Reduced urban heat through enhanced tree canopy cover, sympathetic built form and materials, flexible shade and greening, permeable surfaces, and access to water infrastructure in the centre and on journeys.
- 8.2 For development in centres or other pedestrian-oriented locations, incorporate awnings for pedestrian comfort and protection from rain, wind, and summer sun.
- 8.3 Ensure the street width relates to the built form, provides solar access to the street, clearly defines the street edges, and is of a comfortable scale.

9 Neighbourhood feels safe through out the day and into the evening, with good lighting, sightlines and surveillance

- 9.1 Plan for mixed-use neighbourhood centres with shop-top housing create environments with daytime and evening surveillance.
- 9.2 Maximise opportunities for incidental surveillance of the street from adjacent land uses.
- 9.3 Provide lighting which prioritise safety in neighbourhoods
- 9.4 Provide safe pedestrian infrastructure with adjacent separated cycle infrastructure.
- 9.5 Ensure street parking in neighbourhood centres considers sightlines and does not dominate streetscapes.

Is it an enjoyable experience?



Benchmark images

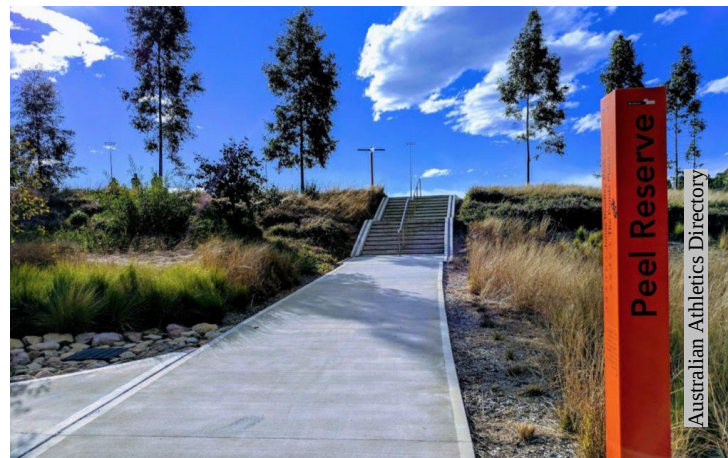
What's in the neighbourhood centre?



Ways of getting around the neighbourhood?



Is it an enjoyable experience?



Implementation

The urban design principles and interventions identified within this strategy should guide the planning and design of neighbourhoods across Western Sydney, with strategies tailored to each neighbourhood's unique context and its role within the wider network of centres.

In established neighbourhoods, interventions should focus on enhancing diversity within neighbourhood centres, creating active frontages, improving pedestrian-friendly streets, establishing local connections, and promoting mixed-use developments to foster safety and social interaction.

For emerging master planned neighbourhoods, design principles and strategies should focus on defining an urban structure which enables density and diversity within the neighbourhood centre, creating fine grain pedestrian networks, co-locating public spaces, and integrating green cover.

The successful implementation of these place-based strategies requires collaboration between government, community, and industry to meet the specific needs of each neighbourhood, ensuring sustainable, liveable, and vibrant communities.

