

PRECINCTS

A BLUEPRINT FOR CREATING
PLACES WITH PURPOSE

APAC 2024

|| The success of a precinct, and the outcomes it can deliver to all users and occupiers of the space, can depend on its type and the intangible challenges that can arise in how precincts are formed and then mature, including how they function and retain currency to endure.

KEY INSIGHTS

Precincts can be studied from a range of perspectives, and no two spaces are the same. Their success, and the outcomes they can deliver to all users, can depend on the type and the tangible challenges accompanying the built form, planning controls, legislation, and policy.

Based on decades of experience, our analysis finds that while the starting point matters - whether greenfield, brownfield or in between - precincts' evolutionary cycles share common patterns.

The direction this takes is far from certain. First, we identify four forces that either positively impact the trajectory of a precinct or work against planned objectives. That is, capacity, community, competition and culture, each greatly influencing whether value can be created - or destroyed.

These forces interact with nine attributes we believe are prerequisites for successful precincts. Many of the world's flourishing built ecosystems share these traits, from robust governance foundations, identity and a people-first approach through to accessibility and equity.

In reflecting on the outcomes a precinct should deliver, we have taken Cushman & Wakefield's Inclusive Cities Barometer as a starting point. This assesses cities using performance-based criteria to describe social impact based on inclusiveness. Here, the performance of precincts can be gauged through the same public benefit lens, contributing to either economic, social, spatial or environmental outcomes.



Our broad view is that these outcomes can be realised when the four forces are sufficiently harnessed and applied positively to the nine attributes of optimal precincts. Even more revealing is that the extent to which this manifests can determine whether a precinct thrives or deteriorates over time.

Considering the interplay between attributes and forces can be value-creating and instructive for decision-makers. It can inform precinct strategies, vision-setting and placemaking, funding considerations, structuring, and engaging with stakeholders and the community. Without this, and constantly adapting, a required step for change that can lead to precinct renewal or success can be easily missed.

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THE SHAPE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT PLAYS AN OUTSIZED ROLE IN THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF OUR CITIES, AND EVERYONE HAS A VESTED INTEREST.

After all, our economic and social development is tied to having functional places to work, live and play, and the resulting ecosystems become larger than the sum of their parts.

As we strive to create the building blocks that support the growth of our cities, challenges remain. This includes facilitating equitable outcomes for all citizens as both the visible face of our urban landscape changes, and the invisible systems that underpin them evolve.

This has sharpened the focus on placemaking and bringing communities and stakeholders together for mutual benefit. Within our cities, precincts form smaller building blocks for growth. At the local level, bringing a human focus to precincts has become one pathway to create vibrant and diverse activity hubs that are well connected to employment opportunities, education and health services, and the local community.

But how well do we really understand the complex and intangible forces that shape the development of precincts and the attributes that determine their success? In this report, we examine the settings and features that ensure precincts can deliver on their intended vision and maximise their contribution to the greater good.

RIESES GOALS AND TRAJECTORIES

01

■ Ideally, each precinct leverages its unique strengths and resources to create a thriving environment that changes with time.

RESETTING THE BOUNDARIES OF A 'PRECINCT'

While the term 'precinct' is widely used in urban (re)development circles, it is often partially understood or narrowly applied. To identify and understand what drives successful precincts, we must adopt a definition at the broadest end of the spectrum. That is, *"a defined geographic area that draws a certain gravitas"*.

PRECINCTS ARE DIVERSE

In urban settings, more general terms are associated with precinct development, including urban renewal or urban transformation. This can extend to heavy industrial areas often located outside urban centres.

PRECINCTS HAVE ORGANISING PRINCIPLES

Typically, a precinct's parts are bound by an overarching structure. This may be an authority or organising entity that provides cohesion beyond planning controls. Without this stewardship, development can be ad hoc or protracted, stifling common ambitions and intended outcomes.

PRECINCTS ARE DYNAMIC BY NATURE

Precincts are in continuous flux due to their dynamic nature and the range of complex factors that can influence their trajectory. To better understand why, we have examined the forces that can exert pressure on various attributes of a precinct and how this can change the direction of a precinct over its lifecycle.

PRECINCTS ENABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Irrespective of the precinct type, the intention is to accelerate orderly development to enhance user, community and economic outcomes. In turn, this can support collaboration and competitiveness for an industry or region on a national or global scale. While these aspirations can be universal, in this study, we focus mainly on large-scale multi-use precincts that involve public and private sector participants.

PRECINCTS CAPTURE BENEFITS BY ADVANCING INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLES

Precinct development strives for higher urban inclusion, which benefits the wider local community. That brings the following outcomes from Cushman & Wakefield's [Inclusive Cities Barometer](#)¹ into sharp focus for precincts and a measure we use to evaluate their efficacy.

 <h3>SOCIAL</h3> <p>Access to social services while facilitating positive mental and physical health for precinct users, communities and populations across diverse groups.</p> <p>EXAMPLE OUTCOMES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density and growth • Health and wellbeing • Inclusivity • Security and Safety 	 <h3>ECONOMIC</h3> <p>Promote employment opportunities, economic vitality, growth and enhance innovation.</p> <p>EXAMPLE OUTCOMES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic vitality • Diversity of employment • Education opportunities • Mixed-use development
 <h3>SPATIAL</h3> <p>Form and space enhance the quality of living through built environment, improved amenities and accessibility, including secure, safe and accessible infrastructure.</p> <p>EXAMPLE OUTCOMES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Urban attractiveness • Diverse housing opportunities • Vibrancy 	 <h3>ENVIRONMENTAL</h3> <p>Promote sustainable planning, green infrastructure and enhance climate resilience and adaptability for the community.</p> <p>EXAMPLE OUTCOMES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable development • Green spaces • Walkability • Air quality

The specific benefit to an individual precinct can vary significantly depending on the mix of more detailed input drivers and desired outcomes.

¹The Inclusive Cities Barometer
<https://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/insights/inclusive-cities-barometer>

PRECINCT PROFILES

A precinct can take various forms across both urban and regional settings, acting as a foundational building block for economic and social development activity.

GEOGRAPHIC HUB



Often a renowned trading location, such as a street or intersection, that has no dominant trading activity.



Australia
James Street, Brisbane



Global
Covent Garden, London, UK

ENTERPRISE



A private sector developed area that can be a mix of retail and commercial, potential light industrial uses.



Australia
Cremorne, Melbourne



Global
Battersea Power Station, London, UK

SERVICES



A public sector developed area focussing on sectors such as health or education, which can link with the private sector to create innovation districts.



Australia
Westmead, Parramatta



Global
John Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, U.S.

RESIDENTIAL



Solely focussed on providing diverse housing options such as social housing or retirement living and aged care.



Australia
Thornton, Penrith



Global
HafenCity, Hamburg, Germany

TRANSPORT



Development centred around key transport infrastructure, including transport-oriented developments (TODs).



Australia
Subi Centro, Subiaco



Global
Kings Cross, London, UK

ARTS AND CULTURE



Creative industry-driven hubs or areas of historic significance.



Australia
Melbourne Arts Precinct, Melbourne



Global
The Custard Factory, Birmingham, UK

LEISURE AND TOURISM



Often regional sporting areas (such as ski fields) or tourism destinations with specific activities (wine regions).



Australia
Hunter Valley



Global
Whistler, Canada

RESOURCES AND HEAVY INDUSTRY



An agglomeration of industrial users within a single area.



Australia
Moorebank Intermodal Terminal, New South Wales



Global
Rotterdam-Europort, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

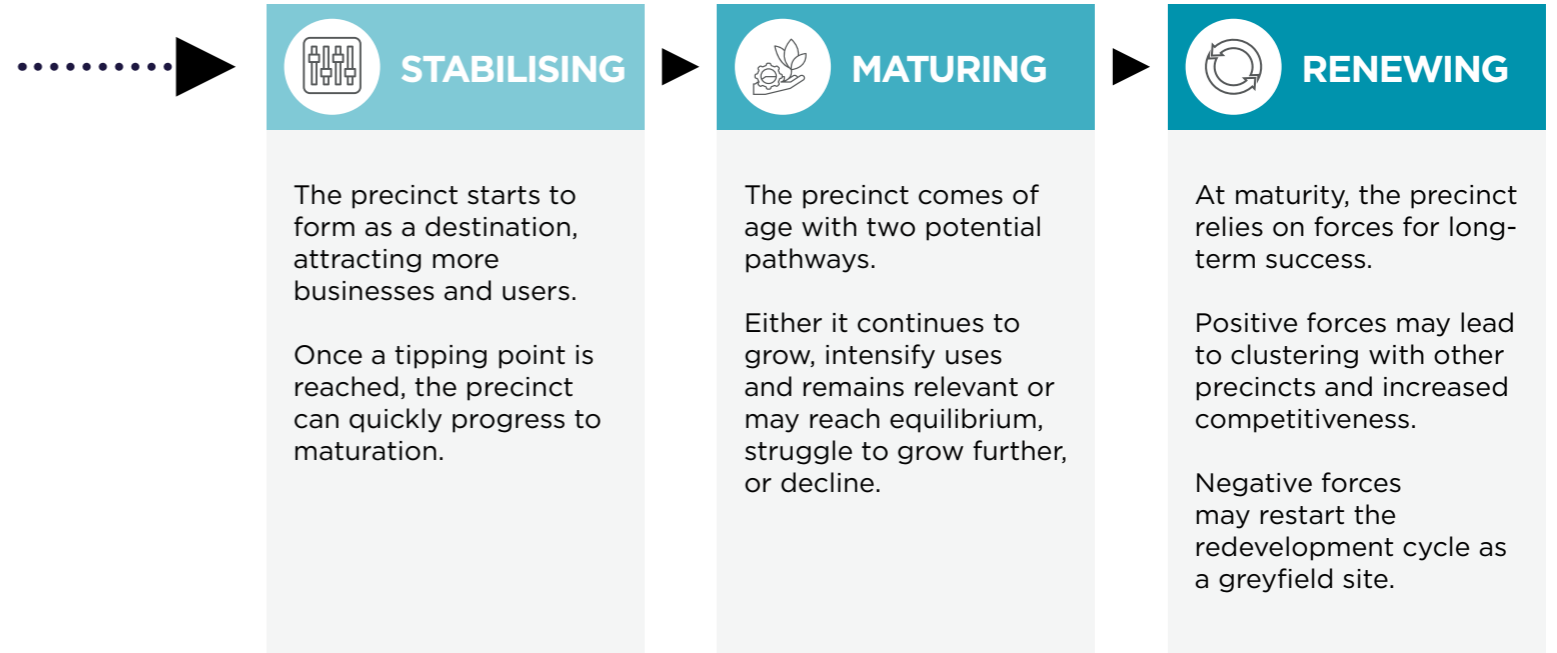
THE IMPACT OF TIME ON SPACE

Precincts can come into existence in a several ways. It is instructive to consider this through the lens of the broader evolution of the built environment, social infrastructure, and city-building.

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PRECINCT ORIGIN POINTS

<p>Greenfield</p> <p>Untested markets generally in outer suburban and fringe locations.</p> <p>Development skews to new residential neighbourhoods through master planning to spur population, local economic and ongoing development growth.</p> <p>Land often identified for commercial and community uses such as retail centres, mixed industry business areas, education and health.</p> <p>Offers opportunities to shape vision but needs higher infrastructure investment and transport connectivity.</p> <p>Greyfield</p> <p>The intermediary between greenfield and brownfield sites, greyfield sites are generally urban areas that have fallen into disrepair often due to being economically uncompetitive, redundant or undesirable.</p> <p>Typically more retail-oriented, but can have other former uses such as hospitals or prisons.</p> <p>Redevelopment challenges can arise from local planning controls, required site amalgamations and potentially community resistance.</p> <p>Relies on strong re-envisioning and collaborative leadership.</p>	<p>Nascent</p> <p>Tendency to be a more organic process where the status of the hub is elevated over time. Mainly in metropolitan locations that have capitalised on a particular strength, whether high levels of (cultural or leisure) amenity, rezoning or a particular industry strength.</p> <p>Redevelopment may then occur, though it is not usually the initial driver.</p> <p>Brownfield</p> <p>Similar to greyfield sites, these are also areas that have become obsolescent over time. Brownfield sites tend to have a greater industrial-related heritage, are more likely to encounter contamination issues, and require remediation.</p> <p>These sites are more likely to be isolated from residential areas and encounter less community resistance.</p> <p>This also means effort and attention to integration with the broader community network.</p> <p>Early activations, interim and pop-up uses can be effective in trialling early placemaking initiatives.</p>
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Here, expansion is often considered through the development of underutilised land around the city fringe or re-use of previously developed land within the existing urban envelope. This provides the backdrop for how precincts can be established – and flourish.



While the origination of precincts varies, influencing the pace of development and evolution, they tend to follow common phases over their lifecycle. So, whether a precinct is a greenfield or a brownfield development, evidence shows that all progress through three subsequent phases – stabilisation, maturation and renewal – and share similar characteristics along the way.



TRENDS AND ATTRIBUTES



02

From a variety of angles human influence can be found hidden in different forces that bear on any precinct which can accelerate or hinder its progress.





THE FORCES THAT SHAPE A PRECINCT'S EVOLUTION

The extent to which a precinct can follow a positive course over time, and deliver on intended outcomes, is influenced by a set of prevailing forces and their impact on precinct attributes.

For example, positive forces such as collaboration, connection and legacy-making can foster superior outcomes. In contrast, short-termism, NIMBYISM and protectionism are hallmarks of negative development forces that put individual needs ahead of the greater good and can lead to sub-optimal outcomes. Accordingly, it is imperative to recognise and understand such forces and identify ways to drive momentum behind positive forces and mitigate negative ones.

These forces can be categorised into four areas, where each can enhance a precinct's attributes or erode progress; and may operate singularly or in various combinations.

CORE FORCES



Capacity

The available capabilities, resources, willingness and motivation of an individual, organisation, enterprise or government entity and the ability to exert control and influence.

THE FORCES IN ACTION

▶ Higher capacity can accelerate precinct development. For Barangaroo, collaboration between the delivery authority and master developer has expanded the Sydney CBD's footprint by 8% (adding 22ha to 280ha) over approximately 15 years.

◀ Lower capacity can constrain development. The Badgerys Creek Aerotropolis was envisioned in the 1980s but not acted upon until 2014 with civil works starting in 2021. While there was some impetus, solutions put resources and efforts elsewhere such as building a second runway at Sydney's Kingsford Smith Airport rather than here.



Community

The people who are invested, involved or impacted by events through direct or indirect relationships. These may be classified by geography, interest, culture, or demography and include well-established groups through to social media followers or loose allies.

▶ An engaged community can drive regeneration to enhance local economic development. This was the case in Wilhelmsburg island, Hamburg, Germany, where residents drove change.

◀ A divided community or one-sided agenda reduces the full potential for precincts to deliver on future needs. This occurred for NSW's Cherrybrook Station Precinct where capacity was halved due to community pressures.



Competition

The tension, interests and dealings between different participants and markets that orbit the precinct.

▶ Strong competition in a growing marketplace accelerates precincts. Sydney's Edmondson Park initiated then expanded its retail core to a sub-regional shopping centre within a 6 year timeframe and through a modified state significant development (SSD) approval increased density as an apartment market was created.

◀ A lack of competition and a viable marketplace can lead to unfinished or abandoned precincts. For example, Ghost Cities in China that are a relic of a former economic era.



Culture

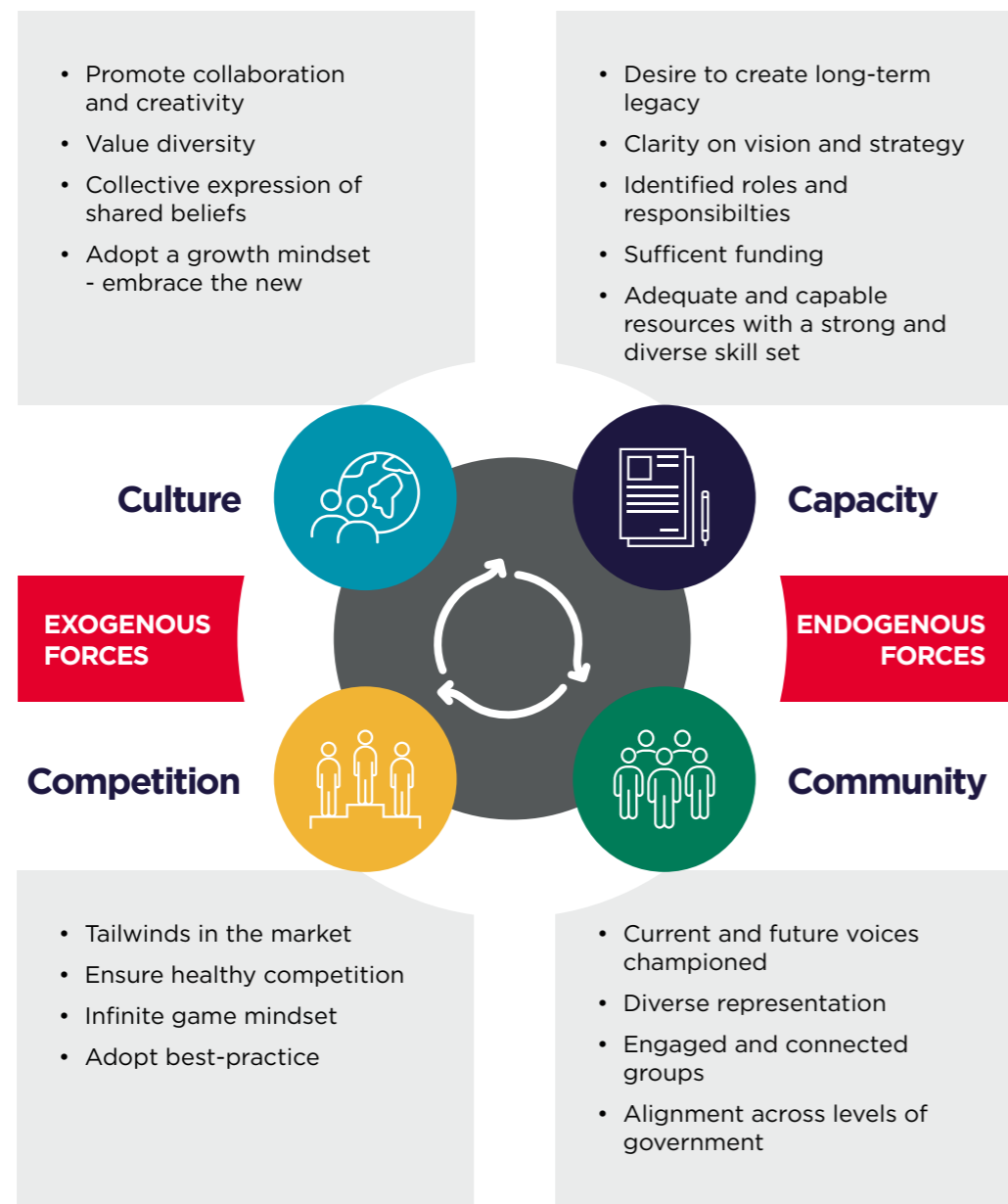
The attitude, approach, style and openness that underpins precinct development, including the values and beliefs and their contribution to frameworks and policies when coming together.

▶ Cultural factors such as diversity of thinking can impact precincts. In Wilhelmsburg Island, Hamburg, Germany, the community, business leaders, investors, government representatives, and an independent think tank collaborated to manage risks and drive the renewal agenda.

◀ Cultural differences can stall progress. A notable example is the isolation of East and West Berlin between 1961-1989, that split major precincts in half. Once the wall came down, these precincts could be re-established.

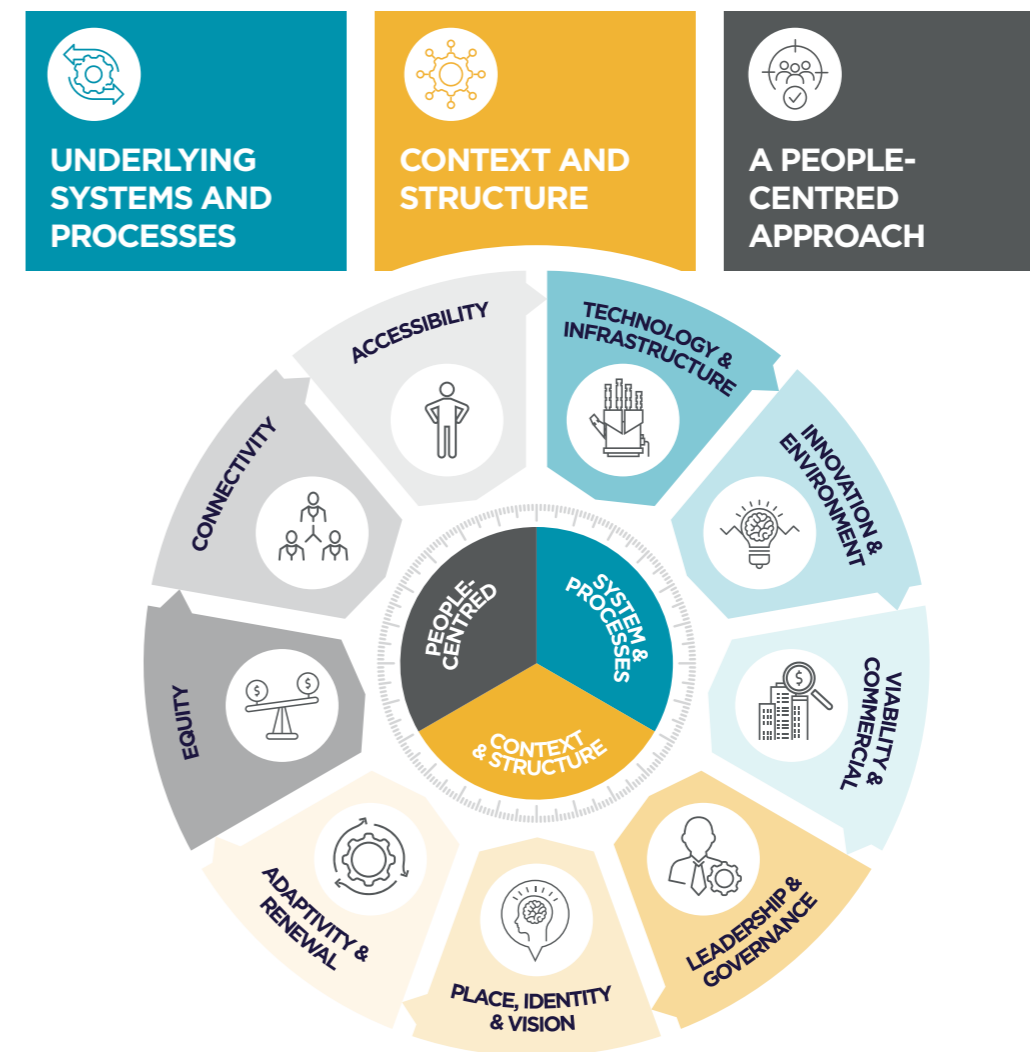
HARNESSING FORCES TO CREATE A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

The four forces described on the previous page don't operate in silos. Instead, they can positively reinforce one another to create broader momentum that can carry a precinct forward. This positive loop is illustrated below.



SHARED ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL PRECINCTS

Having established the typical trajectory of a precinct over time and the impact that key forces can have on development and outcomes, we arrive at the attributes that underpin successful precincts. Here, we have identified nine traits, as seen below, that broadly contribute to:



While these precinct attributes can feature concurrently and work well together, there can be trade-offs to achieving the intended outcomes and benefits.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Strong and transparent governance structure	Focus on collaborative partnerships	Adopt a realistic operating structure and flex over time
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Establishing a workable governance structure can be one of the most complex but essential attributes of a successful precinct. Good governance is built on collaborative partnering principles, rather than transactional approaches, to ensure public, private and community entities collectively drive towards mutually beneficial outcomes.

The development of most significant precincts tends to be public sector-led to provide oversight and avoid a stall or market failure. Furthermore, government funds and grants can become available with the public sector adopting a master developer role to ensure key policy outcomes are delivered, funds are correctly allocated and coordinate support for all entities.

As such, effective delivery structures often mirror a corporate or special purpose vehicle (SPV) governance model to bring precinct entities together. Such models involve an Executive Committee Group (ECG) that functions like a 'board', handling major strategic decisions, with an independent chair to intermediate. Then, a Project Control Group (PCG) supports more day-to-day project execution, akin to 'management'.

More informal structures, such as Steering Committees and Collaboration Forums, can help establish common ground, working protocols, and in building alignment. These are sometimes underpinned by a non-binding memorandum of understanding or an agreement. Limitations can exist amid complex decision-making if authority is unclear.

The success of any partnering model relies on balancing all parties' interests and having core aspects of the agreement clearly articulated, understood and monitored as part of governance oversight. This could be through a regular reporting cadence between the PCG and ECG.

Importantly, governance structures must be flexible to accommodate changes to precinct attributes over time. This may be its **viability and commerciality** where participants enter or exit, which can impact **place and identity**, or through **innovation**, which may require different infrastructure and technology responses and the ability to **adapt and renew** through changes to policy and planning controls.

Agreements that best reflect the precinct's day-to-day operational reality and can change over time ultimately helping precincts to thrive.



Breakfast Point Sydney, NSW

The recently completed urban transformation at Breakfast Point began in the late 1990s, when the former industrial site was sold to a master developer following a public tender process. Without an overarching governance structure, the developer worked with local council following a 'new urbanism' approach. Given the prime location, there may have been further opportunities to create more dense and vibrant precincts, which was the case for other locations that benefited from more government involvement. collaborative leadership.

PLACE, IDENTITY AND VISION



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Creating a sense of place that evolves over time	Engage with the local community to create a shared vision	Social and digital media are transforming place
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Places can carry a deeply personal resonance, connecting a location to emotions, memories, our identity or sense of belonging. While familiarity can bring comfort, change can pique interest. Something that is unusual or stands out may catalogue a particular location, as does an evocative representation or reference, or thematics that give rhythm, meaning or tell a story.

These place-making elements can be transient or permanent and expressed in programs, events, art, landscaping, spaces and built form, with the resulting composition being 'here' and 'nowhere else'. Where this distinction is stronger, a precinct conveys a clearer, more unique identity and sense of place.

A precinct's vision and identity are vital in obtaining a social licence alongside buy-in and an acceptance of change. This is particularly relevant when a community has an existing connection with a place, its amenity or cultural heritage. Investing significant time exploring this connection and using place-making to direct effort towards positive, transformational impact can help accelerate change and minimise resistance.

Here, place-making can be used as an expression of the local people, a place's history and identity while bringing people together by grounding the sense of place within precinct spaces. This can be physical elements such as art, music, food or wine festivals, markets, health and recreation activities, or creative and educational programs to support local economies and build personality. It harnesses the forces of capacity and community and combines well with attributes like **connection**.

The digital era has given place-making a much higher standing than in the past, with unique moments captured on social media and introducing new audiences beyond the local community.



Barangaroo Sydney, NSW

Place-making can also be employed to trial and test future uses. For example, Barangaroo featuring 'pop up' fine dining by Noma to foreshadow that white cloth dining would be available once complete. This also helped to strengthen the perception of prestige among future office tenants within the precinct.

ADAPTABILITY AND RENEWAL



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Ensure precincts are not brittle but adapt over time	Put mechanisms in place to allow for structural, societal change
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To help ensure the longevity of precincts and their ongoing success, they must be allowed to evolve. As the precinct progresses through the phases of development, stabilisation, and maturation, the demands of local businesses and residents will change.

If structures are too rigid, may happen with stringent planning controls or building forms that are too industry specific, evolution cannot easily happen, hampering the precinct's relevance causing everyday interactions and usage to decline. Mechanisms need to be in place that integrate an appropriate response to any material and inevitable changes occurring over time, keeping the precinct dynamic and extending its existence and value.

In Sydney's Everleigh, the Locomotive Workshop has transformed heritage-listed 19th Century industrial rail yard buildings through adaptive re-use. This has led to a vibrant retail hub within the broader Australian Technology Park Precinct. This intervention has meant previously redundant buildings that stood derelict for years have been given new life. A transformation has only been possible due to significant capital investment and the developer working with heritage experts to create more contemporary spaces. Here, the old building form and structure needed significant re-working in some areas to accommodate a very different industry and modern user and occupier needs.



VIABILITY AND COMMERCIALITY



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

<p>Precincts are microcosms of independent yet inter-connected financial ecosystems</p>	<p>Viability is all-encompassing across cost, benefit and timing</p>	<p>Consider using direct and indirect funding mechanisms to support private sector participation</p>
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While precincts are often transformative and visionary, they must be viable and sustain a wide range of independent financial activities synchronised through human interaction. For example, retail benefits from office workers and residents, community centres and libraries are occupied by all, and housing vulnerable citizens has a place in the local economy.

Initial viability can be a barrier to entry to creating the precinct itself. Where there is capacity, private sector developers can bring experience, funding, anchor, or specialist industry relationships to initiate precincts. Where greater headwinds or complexity exist, government may intervene to initiate a transformation and invest, support or work with the private sector to create conducive settings.

Funding can also play a role in enabling private-sector first movers to define what a precinct may become. They may be able to access private capital or equity for smaller projects. However, larger projects usually involve significant investors with a vested interest in the place vision, precinct success, government involvement, and competitive environment and how it shapes their return.

Recently, superannuation funds have taken a greater interest in alternative real estate assets such as specialist disability accommodation and social and affordable housing, given these assets are underpinned in part by commonwealth grants. Private equity has also become a more prominent source of capital for some entities seeking debt funding.

Private equity can structure funding in special purpose vehicles for the medium term, while superannuation funds have capacity to target a much longer term. This means they can invest at scale in major precincts, such as Australian Super's recent investment in the Kings Cross Station precinct, London. Indeed, the focus on mobilising capital to address Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues will be a significant driver in precinct renewal and development pipeline.

Government funding can also be sourced through state-owned corporations, which can have greater flexibility when allocating funds (surpluses). Alternatively, options exist for state and federal grants or specific funding programs with a set timeframe and amount. Finally, the not-for-profit sector may be eligible for indirect support through tax and levy relief.

Ongoing commerciality is generally a matter for the private sector operating in the open market, not-for-profits and local councils sustaining operational surpluses. In some areas, government funding is ongoing, such as supplying social and affordable housing, and the government may also offer low-interest loans to help initiate projects.

Viability should be considered all-encompassing and includes the total cost of development, the economic and social benefits and timing to completion. While a robust analytical approach is required initially, ongoing governance ensures ongoing project viability and flexibility to navigate changes to the development context.



Macarthur Growth Centre NSW

The Macarthur Growth Centre aimed to create a new high-rise city around Campbelltown. However, it failed in the 1970s due to misaligned community and competitive forces despite having planning support and a Macarthur Development Board driving the process. Still, Macarthur Shopping Centre, Macarthur train station, TAFE and Campbelltown hospital were initiated around the same time. Now, a more humble greenfield precinct development is currently underway almost 50 years later, actually viable in today's market.

INNOVATION AND ENVIRONMENT



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Lead change with an entrepreneurial mindset, embrace disruption and uncertainty, and bring others along	Be proactive, think strategically about the future and scenario plan for impacts	Constantly raise ESG benchmarks through sustainability-led design
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Behind the world's greatest precincts are entrepreneurial mindsets that challenge the status quo and never settle for what has been done before. This is relevant across a precinct's entire delivery chain, from adopting innovative design to overcoming development challenges.

Precincts offer a unique opportunity to accelerate sustainability outcomes, including decarbonisation given their economies of scale. This includes using active and passive design to mitigate environmental impacts and roadmap incorporating climate resilience and net zero carbon emissions.

Furthermore, it is not widely appreciated that net zero precincts achieve superior outcomes – they are cheaper, more liveable and create more significant economic growth².

This approach emphasises reducing energy use, waste, pollution, preserving or remediating embodied carbon and transitioning to a more circular economy, in an approach that increases waste recovery, explores opportunities for collaborative consumption while reducing demand on natural resources.

Climate risks also need to be managed. Climate change is no longer theoretical with acute events such as floods, droughts and storms becoming more frequent and having greater impact on the built environment. Precincts can adapt and mitigate these risks more cost effectively than a building by building approach.

² ACT Climate Change Council "Net Zero Precincts" ACT-Climate-Change-Council-Net-zero-emissions-precincts-report-June-2018.pdf

In South Australia, precycling has developed as a circular economy business model where providers work with particular builders. They collect off-cuts at set stages of the construction process, which other businesses recycle or repurpose.

The sharing economy has also provided innovative ways to match services with community members across precincts. From Uber to Airtasker, peer-to-peer platforms are enabling greater efficiencies.



TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

<p>Future-thinking capacity and need when planning infrastructure & technologies</p>	<p>Connecting people with services and opportunities that will improve their lives</p>	<p>Create seamless experiences between digital and physical worlds in the way people live and move around their neighbourhoods</p>
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From a funding and delivery perspective, road, rail, utilities and services infrastructure from a funding and delivery perspective remains a fundamental barrier when forming or renewing major urban areas and impacts lived experiences for better or worse.

In the 1990s, under a draft Metropolitan Strategy, Sydney's northwest corridor opened, culminating in the establishment of Rouse Hill Town Centre in 2007. Without government commitment to infrastructure, roadways and transport connectivity are still unable to service the population. This is even with Sydney Metro Northwest recently opening, which provides a better solution for mass transport than the original bus T-Way. Learnings from projects like this have led to newer precincts in Sydney's growth corridors, bringing public transport and other key

infrastructure connections in first; often requiring expenditure from both private and public sectors, where in striking balance around who pays, can stall progress.

Technology continues to shape how precincts are planned, developed, and experienced by users. Technology such as driverless trains and 'turn up and go' buses are in our newer precincts, with other automated transport already being trialled. Autonomous vehicles now stand to further change travel in and between precincts. In industrial precincts automation increases accuracy and efficiency while reducing costs and injury; as automated cranes move cargo around ports; digital systems manage inventory in warehouses while robots handle repetitive tasks such as storing, retrieving, packing & shipping.

More and more our buildings are moving away from traditional box-like structures and dematerialising at the ground plane as boundaries between space and form are blurred. Our architects and designers can be bolder with modern technology flowing through to construction methods meaning the unorthodox is more feasible. In this way Foster's recent Sales Force building and Quay Quarter recently completed in Sydney's CBD have a unique character and identity in part attributable to advances in technology.

The blurring of digital and physical environments influences how individuals connect with each other, businesses, and their surroundings.

Mobile device usage and social media have popularised places, venues, and events by featuring specific landmarks, street art pieces, festivals, or menu items, as well as boosting audiences and precinct visitation. In turn, this has helped Councils fund activation projects within existing precincts to attract more visitors and reduce crime by creating a fun and relatable environment which garners participation, social pride and casual guardianship within the local community.

The key to successful precinct development is to recognise this evolution and identify ways to create a more seamless experience moving between the digital and real environment in forms and spaces; in a way that brings us together.



Temporary or seasonal digital art installations have become more globally common, drawing crowds. This includes Julfilm på Götaplatsen, a short-story festive projection that changes every year and plays with architectural features on the Art Museum façade in Gothenburg, Sweden or Sydney's own annual Vivid Festival featuring bespoke light installations and sculptures throughout the harbour foreshore and, due to its popularity, has extended to other Sydney precincts.

CONNECTIVITY



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Improve connectivity between the precinct and its surrounds

Create connectivity between uses and users within the precinct

A successful precinct cannot exist in isolation. This is true of the precinct in relation to its surroundings and its uses and users. Precincts are hubs of activity and must be connected to the wider community. True value is created when the precinct enhances the wider area, requiring consideration beyond the immediate building envelope.

Connectivity within the precinct is also necessary. It needs to be easily navigable, which requires an understanding of clustering and sequencing and the interplay between private and public spaces. This can help create mini communities and safer, more secure environments.

Since 1996, the City of Sydney has sought to transform Sydney's CBD into more permeable fine grain connections as remedial work from past large block development by creating shared laneways, pedestrianised passages and spaces between streets. Providing these high-quality spaces, walking routes,

and access to mass transport with the light rail (and metro) has been a game changer in carving out the city's sub-precincts and quarters in newer developments.

Providing connectivity to precinct services can also bring diverse groups together. Recently, Liverpool Council delivered a new library and council chambers in a beautifully executed civil precinct that has now become a significant social hub.

Connectivity extends to enterprise with similar or complementary businesses working together to better the economy. One way for precincts to grow is connect with other uses by wrapping around another precinct type; on a regional level this can build networked clusters coordinating between themselves for greater efficiencies and for sharing scarce resources and knowledge; while clusters may collaborate with each other on a broader global stage to bring goods, services, employment and growth to a nation.

ACCESSIBILITY



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Keep dignified access front of mind

Consider the experiences of all user groups

User groups navigate and experience space in different ways, meaning everybody must be accounted for in a precinct's design, development and operations. Ensuring everyone can access the space in a safe, reliable and cost-effective way relies on dignified and safe access for all and making sure everybody feels safe and not discriminated against.

Australian legislation has driven changes around how we move on and off public transport in our cities which has vastly improved precinct access compared to many global

counterparts. However, more can be done. Unfortunately, there are still anecdotal stories of people with vision impairments encountering older infrastructure and facilities not yet upgraded to accommodate specific needs.

Safety can be gender, age and neurologically specific. For example, women may not feel safe walking down a dark passage at night, whereas their male peers may not be concerned or even aware of this as an issue.



EQUITY



PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Address market imbalances via government support	Provide sufficient community spaces	Celebrate diversity and inclusion
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Not all users, whether individuals or businesses, start from the same place. To ensure spaces are inclusive, effort is required to recognise, understand and overcome potential challenges and barriers to entry. There are myriad ways this can be operationalised.

In a commercial sense, this can be via social procurement or issuing government contracts to counter inequitable conditions—for example, a mandate for social, affordable or indigenous housing.

Equity can also manifest through ensuring there is a sufficient amount and variety of uses of community space. This may be for recreation, cultural, or performance activities based on specific community representation and needs. Equity can bring transparency to who is a member of the community, and give individuals a voice and presence while celebrating a precinct's diversity and uniqueness.



Westfield Kotara and Tuggerah

Within precincts, some venues, galleries and shopping centres such as Westfield Kotara and Tuggerah are now practising 'quiet hour' where lights are lowered, noise sources are turned off, and other over-stimulating features are removed to cater for customers with sensory needs, or that may find high-sensory environments challenging.

IN SUMMARY

While the forces we've described must be well understood and accounted for, these are broader internal and external factors influencing a precinct's trajectory. Looking inward to whether a precinct has key attributes that help create value can be more within the control of planners, developers, policymakers and communities. While not exhaustive, these questions can help illuminate whether a precinct is adopting best practices.

<p>CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE</p>	<p>Leadership and governance</p> <p>Do I have relationship-focused governance and delivery structures designed to keep all parties on track, now and into the future?</p>	<p>Place, identity, and vision</p> <p>Does the precinct's personality draw people in, and can I articulate why it is truly unique?</p>	<p>Adaptability and renewal</p> <p>How would the precinct stand up to a structural change or major externality?</p>
<p>SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES</p>	<p>Viability and commerciality</p> <p>Could new or different funding sources, or interactions within the precinct, strengthen financial resilience?</p>	<p>Technology and infrastructure</p> <p>How do users traverse physical and digital spaces within the precinct?</p>	<p>Innovation and environment</p> <p>How could I incorporate sustainable design principles into ongoing development activities?</p>
<p>PEOPLE-CENTRED</p>	<p>Connectivity</p> <p>How connected is the precinct when it comes to mobility options, and are all spaces safe and secure?</p>	<p>Accessibility</p> <p>Are there any community members that would struggle to access any art of the precinct?</p>	<p>Equity</p> <p>Does the way people use the precinct vary across community members, and does amenity cater to that difference?</p>

DEEP DIVE CASE STUDIES

03

Looking at two contrasting precincts, these forces and attributes play together in differing yet successful constellations; to benefit the local and broader community in uniquely enduring ways.



Navali, developed and built by Urban Property Group

THORNTON PENRITH

Type

RESIDENTIAL AND TRANSPORT

Stage

GREENFIELD AND STABILISING

Overview

Landcom led the development of Penrith’s 41ha master-planned community alongside local council and multiple partners. Transformed from a greenfield site, it offers 2,000 homes—small lots, compact houses, apartments, affordable and disability-friendly options—and retail and commercial space. The site’s natural and heritage features are showcased through parklands and woodland, facility restoration, sustainable water features and community amenity.

Benefits

SOCIAL: HOUSING

- Increased Social and affordable housing stock reduces inequity, improved affordability and quality of life, and boosted local spending.
- Affordable housing in reducing household financial pressures translates to savings of circa \$45,500ⁱ per household per year.
- Contributes savings of circa \$32,117ⁱⁱ (in FY24 dollars) per social housing bed.

ECONOMIC: EMPLOYMENT

- New commercial and mixed-use sites boost local jobs, enhancing social wellbeing by increasing income and easing reliance on welfare.
- Lower unemployment translates to an additional \$47,626.80ⁱⁱⁱ per resident employed per year.

SPATIAL: MOBILITY

- Through precinct redesign and more jobs, the 65% of residents leaving the LGA for work daily can seek local employment, reducing average commute of 35mins^{iv}.
- Each hour of reduced travel saves circa \$17.26^v for individuals and \$56.01^{vi} for businesses (in FY24 dollars).

ENVIRONMENTAL: ENERGY

- Redevelopment allowed for a focus on residential and mixed-use buildings with higher NABERS ratings.
- This translates to cost savings of circa \$3^{vii} (in FY24 dollars) for each sqm upgraded from a 4.5-star to 6-star rating.

Forces

<p>Culture</p> <p>Strong federal-state government alignment and desire to stimulate the economy; government led innovation, and high-quality public spaces via collaborative developer partnerships.</p>	<p>Capacity</p> <p>Landcom stayed involved over 10 years having oversight until the last site was sold; and provided clear master planning and vision, attracting developers; mixed council engagement affected connectivity and adaptability.</p>	<p>Community</p> <p>Supported by diverse voices, the precinct delivered housing, NDIS, and social solutions; future growth requires ongoing engagement.</p>	<p>Competition</p> <p>Set sustainability and retail benchmarks, creating a healthy competitive apartment market where no market existed; strata and small lot designs may challenge future adaptability.</p>
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Attributes

<p>Leadership and Governance</p> <p>Led by Landcom with community-first and developer-friendly principles.</p>	<p>Viability and Commerciality</p> <p>Funded by Landcom and private sector with self-sustaining local economy; small lots with compact housing that helped first homeowners buy-in.</p>	<p>Connectivity</p> <p>Adjacent to Penrith Station and CBD, with people-centred walkable and layered streets, community hubs, and heritage preservation.</p>
<p>Place, Identity, and Vision</p> <p>Vision to modernise living and integrate historical and natural features with a strong focus on high amenity established landscaping.</p>	<p>Technology and Infrastructure</p> <p>Cutting-edge technology for NDIS housing and accessibility.</p>	<p>Accessibility</p> <p>Multi-functional, multi-use and high amenity access catering to diverse usage. Greater access to shade and water play in public spaces previously unavailable.</p>
<p>Adaptability and Renewal</p> <p>Still in early stage of life cycle with future redevelopment potential possibly limited in denser areas due to strata format.</p>	<p>Innovation and Environment</p> <p>Innovative stormwater drainage through canal and wetland filter systems to to reclaim developable land and harness rainwater.</p>	<p>Equity</p> <p>Quality public open space and amenity designed around different community needs and distinctly different from local equivalents.</p> <p>Housing provides high levels and standards of social and affordable housing and ownership opportunities.</p>

ⁱ Aware Super, Essential worker housing affordability crisis costing Australia \$64 billion, 6 October 2023, accessed 5 August, 2024
ⁱⁱ Witte, E. 2017 'The case for investing in last resort housing', MSSl Issues Paper No. 10, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, The University of Melbourne
ⁱⁱⁱ FairWork Commission, 2024, Annual Wage Review 2023-24 - National Minimum Wage Order
^{iv} Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE), 2016, Lengthy commutes in Australia, Report 144, Canberra ACT
^v Transport for NSW, Principles and Guidelines for Economic Appraisal of Transport Investments and Initiatives, July 2016, accessed 5 August 2024
^{vi} Transport for NSW, Principles and Guidelines for Economic Appraisal of Transport Investments and Initiatives, July 2016, accessed 5 August 2024
^{vii} NABERS, Energy efficiency in commercial buildings: How the National Australian Built Environment Rating System transformed the market, 11 May 2022, accessed 5 August 2024

KINGS CROSS CENTRAL, LONDON

Type

MIXED-USE AND TRANSPORT

Stage

BROWNFIELD AND STABILISING

Overview

Ahead of the 2012 London Olympics, the government partnered with master developer Argent to redevelop 27ha of disused railway land into Kings Cross Central. Collaboration between landowners, government, and developers transformed a derelict brownfield area into a connected, vibrant district and modern, future-proof transport hub while preserving original features. The project included open spaces, public squares, offices, diverse housing, and educational facilities, making it central London's largest single-owned mixed-use development in 150 years.

Benefits

SOCIAL: HOUSING AND WELLBEING

- Transforming underused land using 'compact' city idealⁱ with stipulations for 50% of residences to be affordable housing, which uplifted equity.
- Buildings adhere to WELL standards to improve air quality, with related health, fitness and activity facilities installed.
- Social impact outcomes include wellbeing benefits of £12m through volunteering and youth groups, £12.5m wellbeing uplift, and a reduction in crime rates.

ECONOMIC: VITALITY AND EMPLOYMENT

- In 2022/23, Kings Cross Station was the 15th most used of Great Britain's 2,575 stations, with St Pancras the 8th and Euston the 10th.ⁱⁱ
- Planning agreement facilitated transport, healthcare, and education facilities, including £2.1m to create 22,000-24,000 local jobs.
- Local business, training and skills centres boosted employment within the precinct. King Cross Recruit identified 1,500 jobs for underrepresented groups.

SPATIAL: MOBILITY

- Created one of the highest node values in Europe with high mobility and access to local and international transport hubs.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The biggest inner-city transit interchange in London, linking six metro lines and 17 routes for buses with a ridership of up to 140,000 people per day.
- Further increases in connectivity through high-speed rail links, trams and subway lines can provide more than 200,000 additional jobs within 45 minutes transit.^{iv}

ENVIRONMENTAL: EMISSIONS

- Precinct-wide energy centre 100% powered by renewables provides heating and cooling to facilities. Combined with smart, energy-efficient buildings, it is one of the most energy-efficient developments in the UK.^v
- Achieved carbon neutrality in 2021 and is committed to Net zero by 2035^{vi}. Current ambition to create circular economy by 2030 and achieve zero waste.
- 40% dedicated to open space, and neighbourhood has 'Agrisound polly sensors' to measure and improve its biodiversity.



Forces

Culture

Council alignment and recognition as an Opportunity Site enabled masterplan approval; Heritage preservation was prioritised, and ESG credentials attracted global tech firms, but high property prices and luxury retail raised concerns.

Capacity

The 2007 HS1 Eurostar high speed rail link opening at St Pancras and enabling planning policies through Camden Councils UDP and the London Plan, provided initial impetus with the 2012 Olympic adding further drive and funding, and uniting stakeholders to renew Kings Cross.

Community

Extensive consultation enabled community buy-in, leading to benefits like affordable housing, jobs, education, and services; ongoing renewal requires sustained community support to keep precinct vibrant.

Competition

Public funding jumpstarted the project, with private investment following as precinct became a hub for innovation. Competitive office and retail markets emerged as infrastructure and district identity solidified.

Attributes

Leadership and Governance

In-built flexibility to deal with changing conditions within a master plan. A partnership approach between landowners and master developer via a single entity initially private however government joined in to stabilise project post GFC.

Viability and Commerciality

Early government funding through debt markets and attracting inflow of tenants. Staged to gain investor growth in office, retail, and residential markets through stronger demand. Transitioned to longer-term investment from super funds and top tier private sector tenants Google, Meta, AstraZeneca, Universal Music and Nike.

Connectivity

Kings Cross Central connected major stations over and underground providing unprecedented direct links to many UK and European Cities; and reintegrated with surrounding Camden and Islington. Twenty new streets, Regent's Canal, and green spaces enhanced pedestrian routes and city-wide connectivity.

Place, Identity, and Vision

Vision to modernise the area, tackle remediation for a historically significant site, and form new places to live, work, learn, and relax. People-centred and high-quality design was prioritised while balancing the old and new; which reshaped forms, revealed spaces and historic features that simultaneously allowed high volumes of foot traffic while creating an wide and diverse variety of attractive and highly sought after places.

Technology and Infrastructure

Novel planning provided flexibility, allowing adaptation to evolving needs, emerging technologies, and market changes. Some technologies, such as security features, were ahead of their time.

Accessibility

The site has a strong pedestrian first focus, with very limited access for cars and servicing arrangements which don't interfere with pedestrian safety. Met the goal of step-free and full wheelchair accessibility for Olympics, which has been championed since.

Adaptability and Renewal

Following early public consultation and support, the precinct is still stabilising with capacity for future regeneration due to ownership structure.

Innovation and Environment

Many of the 50 new buildings and public spaces display innovative environmental design principles.

Equity

The precinct facilitated social programs for education, skills, employment, and social networking, alongside diverse social and affordable housing options tailored to community needs.

ⁱ London's King's Cross redevelopment: a compact, resource efficient and 'liveable' global city model for an era of climate emergency? Urban Research & Practice, 7 January 2020 accessed 17 August 2024

ⁱⁱ Railway Data Centre, UK website, accessed 17 August 2024

ⁱⁱⁱ King's Cross Central: in London a major place value creation around London's major and most accessible hub, World Bank, 25 June 2015 accessed 17 August 2024

^{iv} King's Cross Central: in London a major place value creation around London's major and most accessible hub, World Bank, 25 June 2015 accessed 17 August 2024

^v Kings Cross website, ESG Book 2023, accessed 17 August 2024

^{vi} Kings Cross website, ESG Book 2023, accessed 17 August 2024

PRECINCTS

A BLUEPRINT FOR CREATING
PLACES WITH PURPOSE

APAC 2024

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