CONCORD WEST

Retail Precinct Action Plan





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The focus of this Action Plan is Concord West, a suburb in the inner west of Sydney, located 16km west of the Sydney central business district. It is bordered to the north by Rhodes, and Liberty Grove; to the south by North Strathfield and Homebush and to the east by Concord, Breakfast Point, Cabarita and Mortlake.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 census, there were 5,850 residents in Concord West with slightly more women than men. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 19.1% of the population.

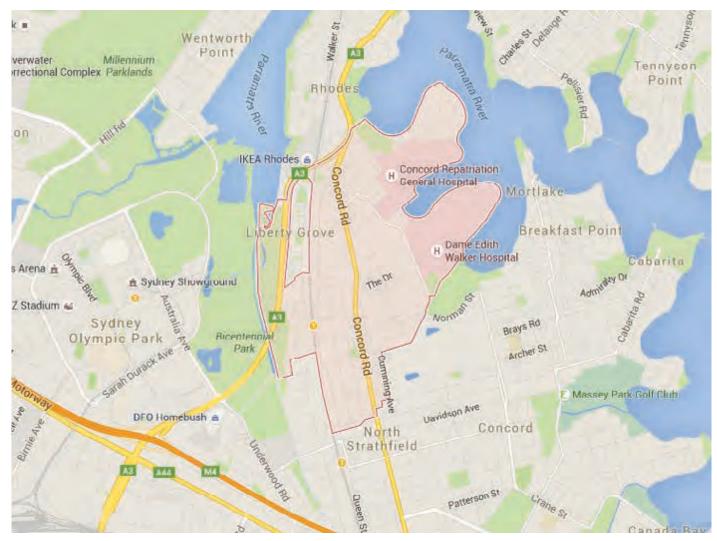
Action Plan rationale

In mid to late 2015 the Concord West Train Station upgrade was completed as part of Transport for NSW's Government Northern Sydney Freight Corridor Program. During the upgrade local business reported a down-turn in trade with access issues for current and potential customers. This combined with an opportunity to upgrade road surfaces to complement the completed station

works provided the impetus to re-examine this area which was last given a Place focus in 2003.

Council, adhering to the Future Plan 20's theme of creating a city of sustainable spaces and places, have used cutting edge technology to lay a "cool" white asphalt road reducing ambient temperatures for local business and patrons in one of the main streets of the business area. Victoria Ave.

Using a whole of Council approach the Place Management team and Sustainability team became involved to further increase the sustainability of the area and to ensure this friendly place continues to evolve, meeting the economic, environmental, cultural and social needs of users. This Action Plan is the result.



Focus area

The current primary area of focus is Victoria Avenue to the East of the train station and Queen Street in Concord West.

The area to the west of the station is covered by a Master Plan detailing development for the area. This is detailed further on the next page.

Please note this area has been selected for the purpose of this Action Plan however some of the actions are not limited to this area and does not necessarily exclude business areas that fall outside this area.

Understanding Concord West

Where people are from

The most common ancestries in Concord West were Australian 18.4%, English 14.7%, Italian 13.7%, Irish 8.0% and Chinese 6.6%. In Concord West 62.7% of people only spoke English at home. Other languages spoken at home included Italian 7.7%, Greek 3.3% and Cantonese 3.3%. Nearly half of the people who completed the 2011 census stated Catholicism is their religion.

Current primary area of focus in Concord West, Victoria Avenue and Queen Street.



Snapshot: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census

PEOPLE

People: 5,850

Male: 2,849

Female: 3,001

Median age: 39



FAMILIES

Families: 1.558

Average children per family:

19

Average people per household: 2.9

Median weekly household

All private dwellings: 2,106

income: \$1,750

HOUSEHOLDS

Average motor vehicles per

dwelling: 1.7



Current planning in the Concord West area

The Concord West Precinct Master Plan Urban Design Study was produced in May 2014. This urban design study details the area to the West of the train station line bounded by Liberty Grove in the north, Pomeroy Street to the south and Powells Creek Reserve to the west. It focuses on land currently zoned as General Industrial which has the potential to be redeveloped to medium density residential. There are strategies to promote the use of public transport, walking and cycling and opportunities to improve some public domain and connections including the Station Avenue connection traversing the tracks to the village area which is the focus of this Action Plan.

The Master Plan provides an opportunity for the Concord West "village" in terms of an increased population looking for avenues to purchase and enjoy their leisure time. However as development is a long term proposition this Action Plan will focus on immediate actions, cognisant of future impacts and ways in which to maximise these potential opportunities.

Housing statistics

Of occupied private dwellings in Concord West (State Suburbs), 83.0% were separate houses, 7.9% were semi-detached, row or terrace houses, townhouses etc, 8.8% were flats, units or apartments and 0.2% were other dwellings (ABS Census 2011).



Connectivity

Concord West Train Station is located within 2 minutes walk from the retail precinct. It is on the North Shore, Northern & Western Line of the Sydney Trains Network. Over a 24 hour period 4,600 people enter and exit Concord West Train Station (2014 Bureau of Transport Statistics). 1,300 people enter the station between 6.00 – 9.30am and 1,200 exit the station between 3.00 – 6.30pm.

The line connects people with the business hubs of Rhodes, Burwood and the Sydney CBD. The CBD can be reached within 22 minutes.

There are also bus systems that service the area and capacity for cycling with cycle bike lock spots available at the train station.

Competing centres

This smaller retail precinct is competing with the following retail centres as alternative destinations for their shopping and/or dining needs.

- Majors Bay Road, Concord
- Rhodes Waterside Shopping Centre
- Westfield, Burwood.

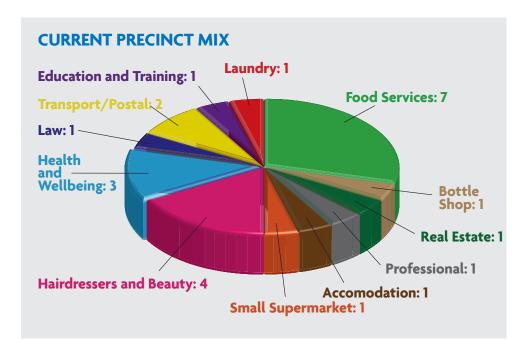
Findings from surveys detailed later in this report and conversations with business owners however suggests that it is the "local and friendly" aspect to the Concord West strips which attract and retain customers. The majority of customers are local residents.



Current precinct mix

The main street retail area we are addressing contains businesses servicing different sectors (see diagram right). One retail space is vacant:

On the west side of the station are further businesses including WestPac, light industry and Paintball and Go-Karts. As this area is currently covered by the Concord West Precinct Master Plan Urban Design Study it is not included within this Action Plan at this stage but there would be capacity to extend the Plan to this area when it is required.



Social wellbeing, recreation and culture

The following are some of the opportunities open to residents and visitors:

- Library: Concord Library
- Near by schools: St Ambrose School, Victoria Avenue Public School
- Childrens centre: Victoria Avenue Children's Centre, 'Only About Children'
- Art and Culture: Embroiders' Guild NSW Inc
- Places of worship: St. Ambrose Catholic Church, Concord Community Anglican Church.
- Nearest children's park: Warbrick Park
- Within easy access is Bicentennial Park and Sydney Olympic Showgrounds.

Evaluating what is required

Part of evolving a place to meet economic, environmental, cultural and social needs requires an understanding of the space as well as the needs and wants of the business community and people using and moving through the space. This information forms the foundation of this Action Plan. The research and methodology adopted to elicit information for this Action Plan are detailed in the next section.

Key objectives

From the research carried out the following objectives have been identified:

- Encourage a more active and vibrant area through façade improvement and streetscape improvement in Victoria Road and Queen Street.
- Provide a cohesive promotion of Concord West in partnership with local business to increase patronage and refresh local residents' awareness of what is available.

An opportunity has also been identified by Council Officers to build on current sustainability initiatives and position Concord West as City of Canada Bay's sustainable village with the "cool" road already in place and an electric car charging station to be placed in a light pole near the train station.

A three pronged approach was used to identify the overall aims and interests of the target audiences, covering the business area and concerns of residents in close proximity to Victoria Avenue and Queen Street. This was then analysed and assessed against the constraints and opportunities within Council to produce this draft Action Plan.

The following list of documents provided the strategic framework for the plan

- FuturesPlan20, a whole-ofcommunity blueprint for the future of the City of Canada Bay.
- City of Canada Bay's Cultural Plan 2014.
- City of Canada Bay's Public Art Plan 2014.
- Concord West Precinct Master Plan Urban Design Study 2014.

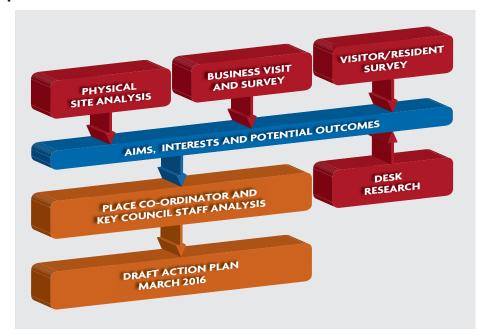
Methodology

The procedure adopted for approaching the Action Plan used both quantitative and qualitative

surveying with on-site situational analysis. Talking directly to business owners, visitors and residents fleshes out the findings from surveys, alerts Council quickly to issues that need addressing and provides an avenue to find partners for potential projects.

What we have done

- Desk review of the demographics of the area and background search of Council's projects to date in this area.
- A Place survey using behaviour mapping, pedestrian count and place audit was carried out on 28th and 29th July 2015 to establish current usage of the area, provide baseline data and gain a better understanding of the space.
- Site visits and conversations with business owners at the end of August, with businesses surveyed on 18th August 2015 and results collated in September 2015.
- A pop-up information event was held on the Concord West station forecourt on 7th October 2015 detailing the new road surfaces, sustainability and waste initiatives people could carry out at home and at work. This event was also used to survey the public passing through the area to gauge residents and visitors views of the area.



Research findings

Physical site analysis

A Place survey using behaviour mapping, pedestrian count and place audit was carried out on 28th and 29th July 2015 to establish current usage of the area, provide baseline data and gain a better understanding of the space. This is a brief snapshot useful to gauge a space and the movements within it.

Samples were done around 8.00am, from 1.45 in the afternoon and from around 5.30pm. Night time analysis would be useful if this Action Plan gets extended.

In general more people were found to use the space in the morning and mid-day than the early evening. In the morning, just after 8.00am was the peak for numbers of people on the shop side (A) of Victoria Avenue. On the non-shop side (B) of Victoria Avenue the peak was just before 6.00pm and the majority of people were women.

"In the morning, just after 8.00am was the peak for numbers of people on the shop side of Victoria Avenue."

Overall more men, 70%, use the shop side than the non-shop side 44%. Over a total of 30 minutes just over 100 to 150 people at site A and B were observed. At site 'C' (near the Train Station) over 15 minutes 46 people were observed.

The age group that forms 44% of users of the Victoria Avenue (sites A & B) were 20-35 year olds, with the next highest category 20% of users, aged 35-49 year olds.

As you would expect at site (A) eating and drinking (29%), along with shopping (25%) were the activities people carried out with 30% walking through the space. This is in contrast to site (B) where 76% of people walked through. Some cycling was also observed at site (B). People on this side were traversing the space or coming to use the services of the Post Office.

The peak time for eating and drinking in this sample was in the early afternoon observation time.

Around the train station the peak usage, 48%, was in the morning with most people travelling solo. Over the whole area most people travelled solo, at site (A) just over 60% and site (B) 88%. Site A had the highest number of groups with four out of the five groups having children.

"Businesses generally love the community, people and village atmosphere of the area."

Business engagement and survey

In August and September 2015 the Place Management Co-ordinator spent some time talking to the business community. Feedback shown in the business survey (findings below) detail the same issues raised by the general community.

In addition, issues with drainage on Victoria Avenue and the footpath were raised. This saved Council extra expenditure as this feedback allowed for the projected road re-surfacing to be delayed to handle this issue, saving the cost of future potential remediation of this problem.

On the 18th August 2015 a paper survey was provided to all businesses operating in the focus area. 38% responded demonstrating a higher than average return rate than most surveys of this nature. They were all business owners with one also a property owner.

Businesses generally love the community, people and village atmosphere of the area, however there were issues that they expressed a need for change on, on the right are some of the comments.



Development

"Build more shops introduce more about
Concord. Extend the
shopping complex to bring
more people."

"Update the footpath to be more user friendly with extra outdoor seating etc."

Parking

"Parking needs to be more than one hour."

"Parking in Victoria Avenue is currently being severely challenged by arrival of UBER and associated cars."

"Better parking for my clients - not fair to make them walk a couple of blocks to get park for 2 hour plus. I hour is not enough. To find parking for myself is a BIG problem too."

"Increase parking from 1 hour to 2 hours (customers are always getting booked)."

"Reserve a space for a loading zone."

Update Victoria Av and Queen St

"A total update of streetscape, looks old and run-down. The roads near Victoria Ave and Queen Street are rough and rubbled."

"Beautify all areas of the village including shops & businesses on Queen Street. Doing so would attract more people to the area."

"Shops need to be updated."

"Our street needs to look nicer."

Cleanliness

"Clean up of the footpaths on a regular basis, there is always rubbish left on the street."

Activation

"We need to have what other suburbs get at Christmas to their shop strip."

The business community, like the residential and visitor population found the area friendly and safe but scored lower for an "exciting" and "interesting" area. Business overall had the majority of their customers Monday to Friday with the majority rating their customer numbers as "medium". Interestingly most business report a low satisfaction with their current economic return, with others hovering around the medium satisfaction rating. Local business also tend to support other local business.

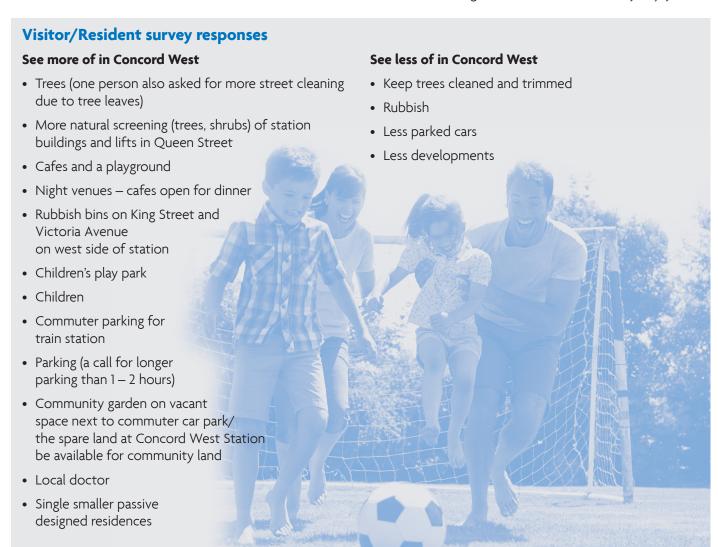
To ascertain what could be done to encourage more customers and add vibrancy to the area a number of questions were asked. Further details are in the Action Plan below but overall interest was shown mainly in a "who is in your street/neighbourhood" promotion campaign with Good Food Month also seen as a good opportunity. Public events were also popular with an improvement to facades and shop fronts generally and entry signage eliciting over a 70% response. A public art mural was also a popular option.

In line with FuturePlans20 commitment to sustainable spaces and places businesses were asked what could be done to make the area environmentally sustainable. The overall majority requested more trees, with a couple interested in a business program.

Visitor/resident survey

A visitor/ resident survey was carried out on 7th October 2015 at a Council pop-up sustainability event on the train station forecourt. Surveys were completed on the spot and residents generally questioned. As people were also encouraged to complete a waste survey and sign-up to a sustainability e-newsletter the number of surveys completed was not high. However the views provided in the collected survey's correlates with many conversations held on the day.

Over 90% of respondents lived in the area with the rest visitors or working in the area. Residents really enjoyed



living in the area, with many of them long term residents. They generally enjoyed the cafes and proximity to the Olympic Park, medical facilities with Concord Hospital nearby and the new station upgrade.

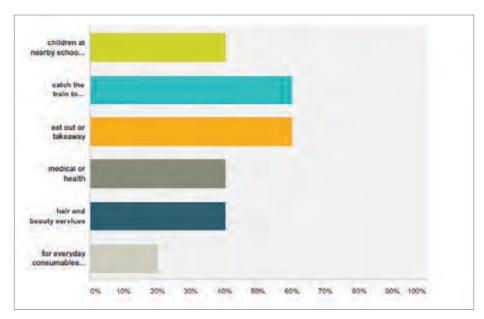
Over 90% find the Village friendly, however only 14% find it exciting and 21% find it interesting suggesting there is more that can be done in the area. On page 10 is a sample of the views of respondents.

Residents all enjoyed the trees and there were calls for more, with some residents requesting more clean-up of leaves.

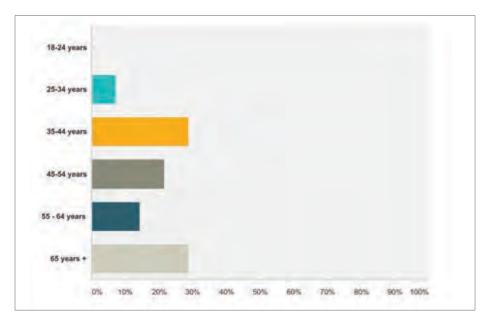
64% of respondents visit Queen Street and Victoria Avenue daily with 20% visiting weekly.

At the afternoon survey time nearly 90% of participants were female. Age varied, see table right.

"Residents really enjoyed living in the area, with many of them long term residents."



Why people visit Concord West.



Age of survey participants.

In the process of acquiring information to set up this Action Plan the Place Management Co-ordinator identified several actions which could be carried out immediately within Council's operating budget.

Active and vibrant

Fairy lights – The fairy lights placed in the trees were not all working. As this was observed in Winter the Place Management Coordinator requested their renewal along Victoria Avenue and Queen Street. This was carried out in October 2015.

Mosaics – It was observed that some of the mosaics in the footpath on Victoria Avenue were deteriorating, to preserve these public art pieces a restoration program was started and is on-going.

Christmas – to add vibrancy, and acting on requests from the business community Council wrapped trees, bins and provided a Christmas decal to interested groups and businesses.

A connected and sustainable centre

Parking – a concern raised by many business owners was the lack of two hour parking available for business patrons. Council raised the parking limit in the train station car-park from 1 hour to 2 hours in October 2015.

Victoria Avenue road surface – this area needed resurfacing and Council installed a new "cool" surface along with other sustainable road surfaces in late November/early December 2015.

Queen Street road surface – due to extra loads the road surface was broken in areas. After feedback from the community about this Council renewed these road surfaces on Queen Street from Yaralla Street to Stuart Street and Victoria Avenue to Killoola Street in February 2016.

Cigarette butts – due to excessive cigarette butt littering a "butt bin" has been installed at the station on the west side for users of the WestPac business and local residents traversing the area. An education campaign and stickers is being carried out. All butts collected are sent to recycling company Terracycle, who are using innovative technology to create everyday items from cigarette butts including industrial grade pallets and garden pots. This is an ongoing project.







Future actions

Following analysis of the data and operating within the constraints and opportunities of Council and community resources the following actions have been suggested.

These are all assessed against the following aims:

- To support local business to grow and be sustainable
- To provide an interesting shopping, eating and meeting environment for patrons
- To further promote sustainable actions in the community and the area as a sustainable village.

In addition the actions had to be well supported by the survey findings, deliverable in the near future and within budget. It should also be of benefit to many and not a few. Where items are not achievable in the near future due to funding or potential amalgamation constraints this has been indicated.

Public realm improvements

Some business owners referenced a potential streetscape refurbishment which had been discussed during the train station precinct upgrade mid-2014. This has been further evaluated by key project officers and at present is not viable due to set-up costs and on-going maintenance costs. Once council amalgamation has been confirmed and new operating plans set up this option can be re-visited.

Below are listed other actions that arose from community engagement which can be progressed to beautify the area:

ACTION	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	ACHIEVABLE
Install a public art mural on a key wall or at a key site in the focus area.	Investigate potential sites	Council	Short-medium term	✓
	Consult the prospective business and property owner for site location	Business /property owner and Council	Medium-term	✓
	If approved, engage a public artist	Council	Medium- long term	✓
	Install the mural	Council and business/property owner	Medium- long term	✓
Investigate the possibility of wall art on the raised footpath platforms on Victoria Avenue to "uplift" the area.	Consult with public art professionals on possibilities and costs	Council	Medium term	✓
	If viable provide the public art	Council with business involvement	Medium-term	✓
Make footpaths easily traversable	Repair footpaths where required	Council	Short-term	✓
Install planter boxes on Queen Street	Identify appropriate and hardy plant types	Council	Short-term	✓
	Consult business owners and establish commitment to participate in the on-going care, cleaning and watering of the plants	Council and Business	Medium-term	✓
Improve entry signage to the area	To be investigated after Council amalgamations	Council	-	Not at present

ACTION	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	ACHIEVABLE
Increase the connectivity between the eastern and western side of the train line	Investigate the underpass from King Street to Queen street as a connection with reference to the DCP* for the Station precinct	Council	Short-term	✓
	Provide signage if required	Council	Medium – long term	✓
Provide a community garden/space north and adjacent to train station carpark	-	Council	-	X This is not owned by Council it is Transport of NSW's land.
Improve road surfaces in the focus area	On-going	Council	On-going	On-going
Replace the footpath grate on Queen Street with heel guard proof grate	Determine the costs for an "artwork grate" to increase visual interest as opposed to a standard replacement	Council	Short-term	✓
	Decide on the best option and install	Council/business	Short-term	✓
General litter review	Currently underway	Council	On-going	On-going
Evaluate the need for a bin on Queen St	Council Officer to investigate	Council	Short-term	✓

^{*} DCP – Development Control Plan

Improve shop-fronts

ACTION	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	ACHIEVABLE
Launch a dollar for dollar paint façade and awning campaign	Re-establish which businesses may be interested in this scheme	Council/Business Owner/Property Owner	Short-medium term	✓
	Get quotes for painting facades and awnings signage	Council	Medium-term	✓
	Develop agreements for local business	Council/Business Owner/Property Owner	Medium- long term	✓
	Launch program	Council	Medium- long term	✓
Increase visual interest at street retail level	Investigate interest of the business community in a visual merchandising make-over or a competition	Council/business	Short-term	✓
	If viable employ a merchandiser or run a competition	Council	Medium-term	✓

An active and vibrant Concord West

There is an opportunity to create Concord West Village into more of a cultural enclave with the refurbishment of the Embroiders Guild in Queen Street and the potential for more public art in the space adding to the ambience created by the cafes, restaurants and Concord Hotel. This is supported by some of the actions detailed previously.

In addition the business community were keen to support wider promotion of their "local village" to surrounding residents and potential visitors. Feedback from the community suggested that having more focus on children in the area would be of benefit and in terms of creating an active and vibrant space would be highly beneficial to businesses and residents alike with 1,558 families in the area (2011 Census) as well as two schools in the immediate vicinity. On the table below are some ideas.

ACTION	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	ACHIEVABLE
Create a campaign to promote the area with a "meet the locals" angle	Set up meetings with the "locals"	Council/Business Owner/Property Owner	Short-medium term	✓
	Provide a postcard campaign for clustered business types and canvas business support to participate	Council	Medium-term	✓
	Promote the 2 hour parking availability to local residents in all promotions	Council/Business Owner/Property Owner	Medium-term	✓
	Provide 3 x print ads in the Inner West Courier paper	Council/Business Owner	-	✓
"Good Food" promotion	Set up a framework for promotion and engage with businesses who are interested in a promotion	Council and business owners	Short-term	✓
	In conjunction with local food businesses create a social media campaign to highlight their offerings	Council and Business	Short-medium term	✓
Provide public fairs and events	-	Council	-	X Investigated by Council and found not to be effective use of resources
Create a vibrant festive Concord West at Christmas as part of wider City of Canada Bay Council activities	Decorate the street with Christmas bin wraps, shop front decorations and other items	Council and Business	Near Christmas 2016	✓
	Investigate business support for hosting wandering carol singers for the evening economy	Council	Medium term	✓

ACTION	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	ACHIEVABLE
Create a child friendly and active retail precinct	Investigate with businesses in the precinct ways to be more child friendly and promote this aspect of the village to visitors and residents	Council and business owners	Short-medium term	√
	Create links with the schools where appropriate	Council/business owners/schools	Short-medium term	✓
	Investigate the possibility for creating child spaces in the public realm, e.g. on footpaths/station forecourts	Council and regulatory bodies	Short-medium term	✓
Encourage cycling in Concord West and to buy local	Investigate business support for a "cycle and shop" promotion.	Council and Business	Medium-long term	

Sustainable Concord West

A low vacancy rate in the area suggests businesses are commercially viable however business surveys detail that their economic return is lower than they would like. This in turn affects their ability to grow and improve their businesses, affecting the "look and feel" of the retail precinct. Council is keen to support and ensure businesses are sustainable.

Additionally as a "sustainable village" Council is also keen to support wider environmental programs for residents and the business community alike.

ACTION	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME	ACHIEVABLE
Connect business	Set up a breakfast meeting for businesses to meet and learn more about operating successful business	Council and Business	Short-term	✓
	Assist with Chambers of Commerce set-up if more businesses wish to join	Council and Business	Short-medium term	✓
Provide "Bin Trim" environmental programs to interested businesses	Re-check if any businesses are interested in this program	Council and business owners	Current	✓
Provide more trees in the focus area and near the station as screening	This has been investigated and at present tree planting is at capacity in the area	Council	-	X Investigated by Council and found not to be effective use of resources
Promote waste reduction, re-use and general sustainability to local residents	Advertise local waste reduction and re-use workshops	Council	On-going	✓
	Provide resources to schools and childcare centres	Council	On-going	✓
Set up electrical car re- charge point in light pole	Provide detail on use of the electrical re-charge point in light pole at the train station carpark and encourage its use	Council	On-going	✓

Parking and traffic

Parking was an issue raised by business concerned for their patrons. As stated elsewhere in this plan the limit has been raised in the train station car-park to 2 hours providing more time for customers.

Additionally concern was raised about the sight line turning from Cavendish Street into Victoria Avenue. A Council traffic engineer has reviewed this intersection and has declared that parking at the corners of the intersection are already clearly signposted as 'No Stopping' to assist drivers in parking legally and hence maintain satisfactory sight distances. The kerb extension on the west side of the intersections provides protection to vehicles as drivers position themselves at the

intersection in a manner that allows them to obtain satisfactory sight distances.

Council has also reviewed Roads and Maritime Services data relating to serious accidents and this does not indicate that there is serious crash history at this intersection. The existing configuration appears adequate however the area will be continue to be monitored to determine if and what action may be required in the future to further improve safety. A business requested a loading zone. However as the majority of businesses have called for more parking or increased limits this will not be provided as it would decrease the availability of time restricted parking for customers.



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

This Action Plan is the first step in a collaborative approach to support local business and provide an enhanced shopping/leisure destination for local residents and visitors alike.

The successful implementation of this Action Plan will rely on partnerships formed with the communities within it.

This is a time of change for City of Canada Bay Council and as such this Action Plan may also change, however the core elements of enhancing the space, creating a more vibrant and active centre and promoting this hidden gem will remain.





WHERE TO FROM HERE?













