

Step 7: Managing Parking and Improving Access

Auto access and parking are critical to the city centre's success as a market. Nevertheless, a planning approach that consistently gives priority to efficient traffic flows and inexpensive surface car parking for individual developments will lower the quality of the pedestrian environment. All central areas should be designed with the pedestrian in mind, and on key retail streets, the pedestrian should receive top priority. While vehicular traffic and on street parking should not be excluded, cars and parking should be carefully managed to avoid overwhelming the human scale of the streets⁵.

Decisions about traffic management and car parking are among the most important in making a town centre a high quality place for people. Inevitably, there needs to be trade-offs between vehicle, public transport and pedestrian needs and difficult decisions need to be made so that an appropriate development pattern and urban environment can be created.

Vehicle access to a town centre must be based on a logical and well-defined street hierarchy. In planning for better vehicle circulation, the objectives should be to:

- provide reasonable access to the town centre,
- ensure through-traffic is guided around the central core area and local town centre traffic is directed to major parking areas,
- design the circulation system so that drivers are readily able to orient themselves.

However, in developing a good vehicle circulation system, it is important not to trade off the quality of the pedestrian environment or the integrity of the existing urban fabric in order to optimise car movements.

Car parking is another major issue that needs careful consideration. Large surface car parks break up the urban environment, increase distances between shops and services, and prevent integrated development. Sufficient car parking must be provided to encourage patronage of a centre, yet it is also crucial to minimise the land area required to do so. Open car parking lots and multi-storey car parking stations do not contribute to an attractive public domain and are therefore inappropriate in locations where active street frontages are sought. Underground car parking or the internalisation of car parking within centralised parking structures with active uses fronting streets are, in terms of the public domain, the best way to provide for vehicles within the town centre.

The difficulty in developing an appropriate car parking strategy is that different activities require different parking regimes - short stay parking of 5-15 minutes for quick shopping trips and to pick up and drop off passengers, longer stay parking of 2-3 hours for longer shopping trips and related activities, and all day parking for town centre workers who cannot access the centre by other modes of transport. In addition parking requirements may vary significantly between time periods, that is, weekdays, after hours and weekends.

Along streets, short stay parking is appropriate as it allows good accessibility for people to run quick errands and undertake single purchases while at the same time creating street activity. Priority should be given to short-term retail or business customer use, whilst longer term or all day parking can be provided in parking stations away from the main street.

⁵ Cy Paumier, op cit, p45

Car parking demand, especially for longer-stay parking, can be managed through the promotion of the use of public transport to access the centre by town centre workers. For example, the cost of long term or all-day parking in the centre could be increased to reduce affordability and encourage public transport use. Longer-term car parking for those unable to travel by other means could be provided farthest out from the town centre. Depending on the location of such a car parking station in relation to the town centre, the provision of a subsidised shuttle bus could be explored to transport workers from their cars to and from the centre.

The amount of surface level car parking can be reduced by the construction of multi-storey car parking stations away from the main street, however there are limits on the economic feasibility of these structures. Town centre parking should be designed and located so as not to interfere with the amenity of the main street or other pedestrian thoroughfares.

In addition the sharing of car parking spaces by businesses during the day and other entertainment or cultural uses at night is appropriate and should be recognised in car parking requirements.

Public transport provision, both to and within a town centre, is important to ensure an accessible and vital centre. The aim is to decrease reliance on the private vehicle and make other transport options attractive and viable. Free internal shuttle bus services help to reduce reliance on the car for trips within the centre, and encourage interaction with the public domain. These services need to be of a high frequency, reliable, clean and visible and become part of the town's identity over time. The route for this service needs to be integrated into the pedestrian network and provide for direct and quick movement around the centre.

An accessible town centre should also include a safe and legible cycleway network. Where well-planned cycle routes are available, there is potential for a significant number of trips to be undertaken by this mode rather than by cars. Bicycle use also activates the pedestrian environment and offers a more intimate town centre experience.

A successful cycleway network relies on appropriate facilities for bicycle parking. Bicycle parking should be located at street level, at major nodes and activity areas. A bicycle parking code should be developed as part of a new parking code.

The existing transport and parking situation in St Marys

The road hierarchy in St Marys is logical in that it comprises a pattern of north-south and east-west running streets. St Marys' main street, Queen Street, carries the highest volume of traffic although it does not itself provide a thoroughfare to North St Marys, across the railway line. The speed of vehicles along Queen Street is generally low which is desirable in areas of high pedestrian activity. However, the existing traffic situation in the centre provides opportunities for pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. This could be overcome by further reinforcing the primacy of pedestrian movements over vehicles.

St Marys is well serviced by car parking within its Town Centre, that is, the amount of car parking provided exceeds that required when measured against both current demand and Council's car parking code. Surface car parking comprises the majority of car parking within the centre. There are three main car parking locations – the public car parking immediately behind Queen Street along East and West Lanes; the customer car parking area surrounding Village Square; and the customer car parking area surrounding Station Street Plaza. The large expanse of car parking surrounding the two decentralised retail centres effectively acts as a barrier to their integration with Queen Street.

In terms of public transport, St Marys Railway Station is located at the northern end of Queen Street adjacent to the bus interchange which fronts Station Street. Bus services operated from the interchange link St Marys to Oxley Park, Mount Druitt via Colyton, St Clair and Erskine Park, West St Clair, UWS Werrington and Penrith. The frequency of bus services are less than optimal with most passengers having to wait for at least 30 minutes from one service to the next. In addition there are concerns that current negotiations with private bus

services regarding future contracts may not necessarily deliver a similar or improved level of service sufficient to encourage higher bus usage.

In terms of internal accessibility and legibility, St Marys has a reasonable pedestrian network with strengths such as wide footpaths with existing awnings. However, the existing car parking situation promotes reliance on the car for access to the centre and encourages customers to drive to multiple destinations within the centre rather than parking and then walking between different stores and services.

Apart from encouraging car reliance, the location of car parking in St Marys Town Centre does not present a major hindrance to the creation of a vital town centre as it is located away from the main street. The space dedicated to car parking presents good opportunities for redevelopment over time, however attention must be given to the construction of a centralised car parking facility that will enable the freeing up of the existing car parking land for redevelopment. As Council owns the majority of surface car parking within St Marys future development of this land can be managed or staged concurrently with the provision of alternative public car parking provision.

Cycle networks currently exist within St Marys however they are not currently afforded a high priority and do not provide appropriate levels of permeability throughout the centre. Upgrades and additions to the existing networks have been identified within the SKM report, and should be incorporated into the transport network to and within the St Marys Town Centre. Upgrades should also include bicycle parking provisions.

Short, medium and long term actions are required for the future provision and management of car parking in the Town Centre that will better encourage and develop public transport usage, and still meet the needs of all user groups. Better management of the travel demands of different user groups seeking to access the Centre requires an improved understanding of individual needs. Investigating the specific needs of the users of the Town Centre will enable a balanced and sustainable response to be developed to support an accessible centre.

Step 7: Strategies and actions for improving car parking and access to the St Marys Town Centre

Step 7	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
7.1	Understand access and transport issues within St Marys	Undertake detailed surveys and investigations to establish the following: - Different user needs - Parking provision for different land use types - The potential for limiting on-site parking requirements for commercial, retail and residential development within the Town Centre - Appropriate time zones and future pay parking arrangements - User awareness information requirements - Safety and security of car parking	Council	Initial survey undertaken October / November 2006. Report prepared March 2006, continued in 2006 / 2007
7.2	Plan for improved access to the town centre	Prepare an Accessibility Action Plan to identify appropriate short, medium and long term actions to improve access to the Town Centre based on travel demand management principles	Council	2006 / 2007
7.3		Prepare a car parking strategy and Section 94 Contributions Plan that identifies appropriate car parking requirements for residential, commercial and retail developments.	Council	Draft prepared, to be completed (+ S94 Plan) 2006 / 2008
7.4		Investigate the long-term relocation of car parking to peripheral sites in multi deck form to maximise land use efficiency with the provision of shuttle buses to transport workers and others to the Town Centre, if considered appropriate.	Council	2006 / 2007
7.5		Investigate opportunities to reduce traffic speeds along Queen Street while maintaining vehicle circulation.	Council	2006 / 2007
7.6	Review car parking provision	Manage short stay car parking to ensure availability of spaces and regular turnover.	Council	Ongoing
7.7.		Identify opportunities to relocate existing car parking spaces from surface parking areas, so that the land is available to use in ways that better contribute to the vitality and viability of the Centre.	Council	2006 / 2007
7.8		Require car parking for new development to be located within the building and buffered from the street frontages by other land uses.	Council	Ongoing
7.9		Identify opportunities for shared use of car parking by multiple users.	Council	Ongoing
7.10		Limit long-term car parking within the Centre and provide spaces for short-term parking for shoppers and visitors.	Council	2006 / 2007
7.11	Reduce reliance on private vehicular access to the town centre	Continue lobbying State Rail and private bus companies to improve public transport services.	Council	Ongoing
7.12		Encourage transit-oriented development in and around the Town Centre close to existing public transport.	Council	Ongoing
7.13	Reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict	Prepare a bicycle plan for the Town Centre which is integrated with the overall planned network, gives a high priority to bicycle access through the Town Centre, makes provision for bike parking facilities within new development, along streets, and major nodes and activity areas.	Council	2006/2008
7.14		Provide for appropriate traffic management through the ongoing implementation of the St Marys Town Centre Traffic Management Scheme.	Council	Ongoing
7.15		Develop a pedestrian network that reduces motor vehicle conflict, encourages pedestrian access, improves amenity and enhances legibility.	Council	Ongoing

Step 8: Fostering Economic Investment

A Town Centre that is vibrant and attractive is also one that attracts economic investment and creates jobs. Most importantly, the Town Centre's character as a place plays a key role in whether it succeeds economically:

St Marys is a district-sized commercial centre which services surrounding suburbs. The centre's trade areas overlap with the trade areas of Mt Druitt Centre and potentially new centres which are planned at Werrington and the ADI site to the north. The continued commercial viability of St Marys is therefore vulnerable to market competition from surrounding growth centres. At present St Marys Town Centre is an older style retail centre that is not a destination / regional centre, not a convenience centre, nor a big box retail centre. In the face of increased competition the challenge for St Marys is therefore to redefine its role, and in turn strengthen its viability. Hill PDA suggests that an appropriate role for St Marys is as a convenience centre supported by a diversity of uses including residential development and discount department stores.

Further Hill PDA notes:

The amount of commercial floorspace at St Marys is 16,500 sqm or 25% of the total floor space. This is typical for a centre of this size where office demand stems from professional service providers such as banks, real estate agents, accountants, lawyers and health care professionals. The growth of commercial space is largely a function of the amount of retail space. The retail space acts as anchors to attract customers. If St Marys cannot expand its retail offer to compete with the surrounding competing centres then it is likely to contract with a flow on effect to the professional service providers who may consider relocating.⁶

To ensure its continued viability, it is suggested that the sustainability of St Marys needs to be protected under a 'Centres Policy' that controls the impact of retail expansion on other centres. Retail expansion is critical to the Centre's continued viability with flow on effects to office and other uses. It is critical that to attract retail development St Marys identifies a point of difference for itself and builds on this to market the Centre to future businesses, service providers and residents.

In addition St Marys needs to provide for a greater diversity of uses including residential which in turn will support the viability of expanded retail and other activities.

⁶ Hill PDA, 2004A, "Penrith City Centre & St Marys Town Centre Vitality and Viability Review – Economic Analysis", p. 10.

Step 8: Strategies and actions to foster economic investment in St Marys

The various strategies identified in this document aimed at improving the viability and vitality of the St Marys Town Centre, will in themselves generate economic investment. The widespread promotion of the St Marys Town Centre Strategy together with a strong commitment to its implementation will send a clear message to the business community that investment in the Town Centre is worthwhile. The following actions have been identified to achieve the above strategies.

Step 8	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
8.1	Develop St. Marys as a Town Centre within a hierarchy of centres	Lobby the Department of Planning to attract resources to facilitate the growth of St Marys as a Town Centre in a manner that is consistent with the vision, strategies and actions identified within this Town Centre Strategy.	Council	Ongoing
8.2		Ensure City wide LEP appropriately zones town centre	Council	2006 / 2008
8.3		Review, with the Department of Planning, the potential for a Business Park in the City that complements and supports the activities of Penrith as a Regional City, and St Marys as a Town Centre.	Council	2006 / 2008
8.4		Identify businesses that serve the local area and encourage them to locate in the town centre.	Council	Ongoing
8.5		Ensure planning controls in local business precincts allow appropriate range of uses and facilitate development.	Council	2006 / 2008
8.6	Identify precincts to ensure a balance of activities	Create precincts and develop planning controls that encourage a clustering of activities and urban design responses that foster linkages between precincts within the town centre.	Council	2006 / 2008
8.7	Build a positive identity	Promote the town centre image and lifestyle (marketing an image/brand). (refer to Step 1)	Council	Ongoing
8.8		Recognise the synergy of promoting the arts and economic development (refer to Steps 4 and 5).	Council	Ongoing
8.9		Investigate opportunities for Council to enter into joint venture projects with the private sector to undertake catalyst development projects.	Council	Ongoing
8.10		Develop a 'point of difference' for St Marys Town Centre, which can be used in marketing the Centre. (The 'point of difference' could build on an existing role developed within the Centre or target a market niche, which is not currently being catered for elsewhere within the region).	Council and Town Centre Association	2006 / 2007
8.11		Identify Council properties that could be offered for lease at reduced rents to types of business targeted to develop the Centre's image based on the point of difference identified above.	Council	2006 / 2008
8.12	Facilitate economic development	Ensure parking for business is provided at appropriate levels (refer to Step 7)	Council	Ongoing
8.13		Undertake a review of development costs and recommend how future investment can be attracted to the Town Centre.	Council	2006 / 2008
8.14		Investigate opportunities with others for incubator space within the Town Centre to assist emerging businesses, and in the Penrith Valley Cultural Precinct to assist emerging cultural businesses and endeavours.	Council	2006 / 2008 and ongoing
8.15	Improving worker amenity	Improve the amenity for office workers with improved streetscape and public facilities landscape (refer to Step 4).	Council	Ongoing

Step 9: Achieving a Quality Built Environment

The architectural character and quality of buildings in a Town Centre make a significant contribution towards its overall attractiveness and identity. It is not enough just to concentrate efforts towards achieving a high quality pedestrian environment; the quality of the adjoining built form is crucial to the effectiveness of any Town Centre strategy. A high quality built environment attracts economic activity and investment and engenders pride in the community.

In trying to create a distinctive identity for a particular project, new urban architecture has tended to ignore consistency in favour of dramatic contrasts. Often, this extreme variety creates disorder and a lack of harmony in the urban environment.⁷

It is important to note that diversity in architectural styles is not inherently bad, provided that it is contained within a design framework that allows for variation in individual building styles whilst maintaining an overall coherent and identifiable theme for the place as a whole.

There are a number of related elements that contribute to visual and functional continuity:

- consistent building heights, massing, scale, overall organisation of building facades, with a clear address to the street
- a continuous developed edge along streets that gives clear definition to the street space
- continuity and rhythm at ground level, that is, similarities in quality and style of building materials, consistent relationship between solid and glazed elements, clearly defined ground and upper storeys
- functional groupings of associated activities which have similar building requirements.

The built form in St Marys Town Centre

Development along Queen Street, St Marys generally presents a uniform address to the public domain. Buildings are oriented to the street, are generally one or two storeys in height and have consistent building lines adjacent to the wide public footpaths. Awnings provide shade and shelter to pedestrians on both sides of Queen Street. However, there is no defining entry to the centre, either from the Great Western Highway at the south or from the railway station to the north.

The existing built form is generally consistent with the elements that contribute to visual and functional continuity as identified above. However, as the demand for redevelopment increases within the centre, a consistent approach will be required to ensure that the new built form will also provide for development that is coherent and provides continuity to the public domain. Good urban design aims for continuous, enclosing streetwalls, consistent building setbacks and heights, and cohesion and repetition in the architectural composition of buildings to reinforce the perception of the street as a defined space.

⁷ C. Paumier, op cit, 131

Step 9: Strategies and actions to achieve a high quality built form in St Marys

Step 9	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
9.1	Prepare detailed planning and design guidelines	Guidelines to be incorporated into a Town Centre Development Control Plan and utilise precinct control plans. (Refer to Step 4 and Step 10)	Council	2006 / 2008
9.2	Town Centre Design Review Panel	Investigate and identify preferred model for a Design Review Panel, including composition and terms of reference	Council	2006 / 2008

Step 10: Providing the Right Planning, Development and Implementation Framework

Traditional regulatory approaches to planning for town centres have struggled to deliver vibrant centres which are people centred. A planning system which is heavily based on zoning and the segregation of land uses does not provide for the creation of places that “people will find so special that they will visit them repeatedly, invest in them and choose them as residences” (ULI, 2002). Where centres have developed which exhibit a strong sense of place, this has generally been accidental rather than as a result of a clearly articulated and implemented plan. To transform town centres it is therefore essential to move from a system of segregated land uses to a focus on mixed-use development and place making.

To secure the revitalisation of the St Marys Town Centre it is critical to create the right regulatory environment which provides for and promotes the types of development which will contribute to attainment of the vision and provides for the creation of the “place” that is St Marys.

It is also vital to the success of the Strategy that regulatory controls provide for partnerships in the implementation of the vision. It is important to recognise that public commitment in the Centre through measures such as upgrading of the public domain and government investment in key projects will act as catalysts for private investment. It is similarly important to ensure that development within the centre is competitive from a regional perspective, that is, development returns are equal to, if not greater than, other similarly sized centres. In this regard it is essential that regulatory costs, such as car parking requirements or development contributions do not “price St Marys out of the market” and result in a leaking of investment to other centres.

To this effect the strategies identified which seek to achieve the vision need to be underpinned by planning controls and development guidelines which provide for a form of development that supports and drives the realisation of the vision.

The existing planning controls in the St Marys Town Centre permit a mix of commercial and residential development, however opportunities for residential development have not been taken up to date. The design controls for residential flat buildings require a large site area with generous building setbacks, which is nearly impossible to achieve in St Marys Town Centre as extensive site amalgamation would be required given the existing subdivision and ownership patterns. In addition, high development costs associated with Council's car parking code has further restricted development potential to date.

As noted above, the implementation of a clear planning framework for achieving the vision and for coordinating changes in the Centre's physical structure is critical. The key is to ensure that the planning controls are tested so that the resulting built form is understood and agreed upon at the outset, and so that developers can be confident that development that meets the planning parameters is also economically viable.

A new planning regulatory framework for the St Marys Town Centre should aim to achieve the following:

- Through education, prescription, guidance and example, a high quality urban environment which is consistent with the vision and which provides for flexibility and innovation.
- A mix of land uses which can respond to market demand but which also can evolve over time in response to changing community needs and which do not give primacy to one land use to the exclusion of others (that is, encourage residential development to the extent that commercial is no longer viable).
- A development and investment environment within the centre which is financially attractive when compared with other similar centres.

- Car parking requirements which adopt a traffic demand management approach based on need and accessibility while at the same time providing good accessibility for the full range of centre users (that is, shoppers, workers, commuters, visitors etc).
- A healthy environment which contributes to the physical, mental and social well being of residents, workers and visitors through equitable access, walkability, opportunities for social interaction, a safe environment and appropriate recreational opportunities, services and facilities.

Council is already streamlining its approvals process, to ensure that development applications are assessed and determined within a specified timeframe (provided adequate information is submitted). This is aimed at providing developers with a guarantee of service, to improve certainty and reduce holding costs associated with the approval process.

Step 10 Strategies and Actions to provide the right planning, development and implementation framework

Step 10	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
10.1	Planning Controls	Prepare a plan showing the future structure of the Centre, including the hierarchy of streets, squares, laneways, parks and their character/function and future environmental qualities.	Council	2006
10.2		Prepare a draft local environmental plan which identifies appropriate zones, land uses etc.	Council	2006 / 2008
10.3		Investigate opportunities for encouraging appropriate development in the Centre, including identifying Council owned land / buildings for redevelopment	Council	2006 / 2008
10.4		Prepare a Town Centre Development Control Plan which will identify the broad development controls to apply in the Town Centre	Council	2006 / 2008
10.5		Encourage building forms, construction methods and tenure arrangements to enable building adaptation for commercial and/or residential uses.	Council	2006 / 2008
10.6		Review State Government and other relevant 'active health' policy documents, and incorporate appropriate requirements into the DCP.	Council	2006 / 2008
10.7		Prepare detailed precinct plans which: - Identifies the future structure of the centre, - Provides for a built form which is of a high quality, fine grained and which gives priority to the pedestrian and public domain, - Details a range of planning and development controls aimed at achieving visual coherence and a unified urban structure, - Ensures that buildings are able to be adapted for a range of commercial and / or residential uses over time.	Council	2006 / 2008
10.8	Viability Analysis	Undertake a viability analysis of the proposed planning controls	Council	2006 / 2007
10.9	Town Centre Design Review Panel	Investigate and identify preferred model for a Design Review Panel, including composition and terms of reference	Council	2006 / 2008
10.10	Funding Plan	Prepare a funding plan to support the implementation of the Town Centre Strategy including investigating: - Viable transport solutions - Contribution Plans - Developer agreements - Partnerships - Grants and other funding opportunities - State/Commonwealth government partnerships - Council's existing programs and services	Council	2006 / 2007
10.11	Stage Works to deliver early outcomes	Prepare a Staging Plan for Public Works that will improve the Public Domain in accordance with the recommendations of Step 4 Creating Friendly and Attractive places and spaces in Penrith.	Council and Town Centre Association	2006 / 2007

St Marys Town Centre – Activity Precincts



St Marys Town Centre – Activity Precincts

Generally the identified activity precincts acknowledge and reinforce existing patterns of use in the Town Centre. The intention is to allow for a clearly legible series of precincts that define the retail and commercial centre whilst promoting mixed use to be integrated appropriately. The inclusion of the shopping centres into the fabric of the Town Centre strikes a balance between the benefits of street retail life and the convenience of shopping centres.

Precinct 1 – Queen Street Hub (Mixed Use)

The 'hub' of activities – the focus of the town centre – active uses and a vibrant street life with cafes, restaurants and community activities locate here.

A two storey maximum height is maintained at street frontage in order to allow plenty of light into the street, providing ideal tree growth and sunny sidewalk dining conditions. Access to residential development via rear lanes. Pedestrian permeability is improved creating better connections between the town and adjacent residential areas.

Precinct 2 – Highway Entry (Mixed Use)

Development within this precinct provides a gateway statement improving the sense of arrival to the St Marys town centre. Public art and high quality architectural buildings are created and provide prominent statements.

Buildings are kept to 4 storeys adjacent to the highway in order to retain important views to the Blue Mountains. Future development options within this precinct provides for better connections with Queen Street and public open spaces within the Village Green precinct. Improved signage and pedestrian facilities result in better linkages between the town centre and the Community/ Cultural precinct.

Precinct 3 – Village Green (Mixed Use)

There is a focus on community uses within this precinct. Future redevelopment of the Shopping Village results in an improved pedestrian connection to Queen Street. Public parks (Lang Park, Kokoda Park and Coachmans Park) and car parks within the precinct are reconfigured to improve the connectivity of this precinct with Queen Street. Community uses are integrated with the shopping centre. The precinct provides for a vibrant street life and night-time activities (such as a theatre) are encouraged in this precinct.

Precinct 4 – Station Entry (Mixed Use)

This precinct provides a key focus to the revitalisation of St Marys; and becomes a safe and exciting place to be; it is well lit and heavily used by pedestrians; traffic flows are limited and upgrades to public infrastructure is provided and there is street art installed. New development incorporates residential uses that overlook the street – the shopping centre increases its active frontages and provides better connectivity to Queen Street. New buildings do not create overshadowing on the street.

Precinct 5 – Community/ Cultural (Mixed Use)

Currently this locality is the home for a variety of community and cultural uses. These activities are encouraged and consolidated with a future arts/cultural incubator locating in this precinct. New development retains important views to the Blue Mountains and all new development is sympathetic to historic buildings which are located within the vicinity.



Appendix 2

St Marys Town Centre Revised Masterplan