

Step 1: Building Community Support

The community that works in, lives around and frequents a town centre holds an enormous wealth of knowledge about the operational intricacies of the centre and in some respects may effectively claim some form of 'ownership' over the place. This depth of knowledge of and affinity with a place provides valuable insight to a possible development strategy regarding what is 'right' or 'wrong' about a place, or what can be done to improve what is there already. Involving the community from the outset can provide insight into local attitudes about a place and can help to guide strategy or identify a problematic issue to be addressed that may not otherwise be identified.

Involvement of the community in the continuing development of a town centre promotes community ownership of the process, providing greater participation in its future growth. This then creates interest and support for the growing vitalisation, with less 'roadblocks' or problems further down the track from unsupportive or uninformed community members. Involvement of the various community stakeholders in the process from the outset results in an outcome that is welcomed by a majority of the stakeholders.

Any sort of town centre redevelopment cannot be undertaken by Council in isolation. Partnerships with the community should form the basis of any such project of this scale. Partnerships are the only way to successfully implement a town centre strategy and gain ownership for the overall product. Such partnerships should be based on community spirit and loyalty.

In March 2006 the Draft Town Centre Strategy was publicly exhibited. The exhibition period was for 30 days. 12 submissions were received specifically in relation to the St Marys Town Centre Strategy. There were six additional submissions received commenting generally on the process of the project. The submissions were overall, supportive of the project, however many provided site-specific comments and proposed amendments to the Strategy. Many comments were directed at the Activity Precinct and Building Form maps provided within the Strategy. Where appropriate, amendments have been made to the Strategy in response to the submissions made.

In addition to the formal exhibition there has been ongoing liaison with key stakeholders. There was a concerted effort made to ensure that key stakeholders were contacted and that their views in relation to the Strategy were obtained. Council staff have held numerous meetings with landowners and/or their representatives to discuss the implication of the proposed strategies for their land and potential development proposals.

Step 1: Strategies and actions involving the community in the short and long term

The St Marys community's involvement in the revitalisation of the Town Centre should not stop now. There needs to be an ongoing commitment to involving all stakeholders in not only the formulation of the vision and strategies, but also in their implementation. There needs to be continuous opportunity for input and involvement. Following the adoption of the Strategy there will be continued liaison with the community to maintain involvement and ownership of the project including the below mentioned strategies that have been identified.

Step 1	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
1.1	Improve the image of St Marys	Prepare a marketing strategy and continually market the St Marys Town Centre Strategy to inform opinion makers and the media about the revitalisation process and specific achievements.	Council	2006 and ongoing
1.2		Use the 3D model to promote development sites to potential developers and the community.	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
1.3		Investigate methods of 'branding' the Town Centre to create a unique marketable image which has relevance to the centre, its community / environment and its history and develop a marketing strategy.	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
1.4		Develop and implement a marketing plan in stages focusing initially on highly visible aspects such as implementation of branding, public domain improvements, development of key sites, investment prospectus etc.	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
1.5		Undertake ongoing marketing throughout the lifetime of the strategy, timing key initiatives to maximise opportunities to showcase achievements.	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
1.6		Prepare and implement an annual calendar of events for the town centre which increases visitation to the centre (especially out of normal business hours).	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
1.7	Establish a Stewards Group	Consider establishing a Stewards Group, terms of reference and responsibilities.	Council and Town Centre Association	2006 / 2007
1.8	Promote Public Domain Improvements	Publicise improvements through a variety of media such as posters, signage, pamphlets, newspapers and newsletters, etc.	Council	ongoing
1.9	Demonstration Projects	Give priority to key projects including: - rejuvenation of Coachman's Park and its reorientation to Queen Street - improving the public domain and accessible pedestrian networks - a high quality demonstration development undertaken on Council land, and - advancing community and cultural projects.	Council	2006 / 2008

Step 2: Achieving an Ecologically Sustainable Centre

Penrith City Council has adopted the principles of sustainability to guide its decisions and actions. Sustainability is changing the way we operate.. It means integrating economic, environmental and social considerations into decision-making, balancing short-term priorities with longer-term needs and engaging with people.

Council has introduced the Sustainable Penrith program which includes initiatives to reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions, encourage a healthy local economy, ensure sustainability principles are integrated into new development, build community links and protect the natural environment.

A vibrant and vital Town Centre is also a sustainable Town Centre. A centre that is easy to walk/cycle around, that provides for intensification and diversity of uses, that manages travel demand effectively and achieves a high quality and long lasting urban fabric, is one that is sustainable into the future. It is also a centre that provides for the physical, mental and social well being of its inhabitants.

Council is committed to strive for best practice architectural and environmentally sustainable design, particularly in terms of energy efficiency, water conservation, waste minimisation and resource minimisation. It is also committed to the principles of travel demand management, reducing the reliance on private vehicles and providing for enhanced public transport, pedestrian and cycle networks to facilitate sustainable access to the Town Centre.

Many of the strategies and actions identified in this document are pivotal to achieving a sustainable centre. Concentrating land use activities, making the Town Centre more walkable, managing travel demand through better public transport and encouraging a high quality built form are all measures that will help to attain sustainability objectives.

Step 2: Strategies and actions for Achieving a Sustainable Town Centre

Step 2	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
2.1	Achieving a sustainable town centre	Prepare sustainability criteria to guide development activities in the Town Centre that incorporate the following: - Minimise potable water demand from Sydney's mains supply and use best practice sustainable design principles, technology and management practices to conserve water. - Maximise the use of renewable energy sources, reduce energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. - Incorporate energy efficient design especially in relation to lighting, heating and cooling systems. - Consider whole of life impacts on the environment. - Ensure buildings are adaptable, to cater for changes in use and 'whole of life' residential living needs - Protect existing items and areas of cultural and heritage significance, and optimise the potential re-use of heritage buildings. - Not adversely impact on water quality of adjacent creeks and the Nepean River. - Minimise waste generation and ensure that opportunities for waste reduction and recycling are maximised.	Council	Completed 2nd half 2005
2.2		Incorporate sustainability criteria into Town Centre DCP and plans of management to ensure all future development achieves sustainability objectives	Council	2006 / 2008
2.3		Implement sustainability through Council's planning controls, actions and plans of management	Council	Ongoing
2.4		Explore options for measuring the ecological footprint of the City Centre	Council	2005 / 2007 and ongoing

Step 3: Forging Strong Partnerships

Downtown revitalization requires a high degree of cooperation and is best achieved when a unique 'private public' process is used.³

A strong partnership between local government and the private sector is fundamental to the successful implementation of a town centre strategy. Whilst it is possible for the public sector to undertake improvements to the public domain and to even involve itself in catalyst development projects it is the private sector that holds the key to building the critical mass needed to spur a cycle of sustainable future growth.

A successful transformation of a town centre depends on the ability of the private and public sectors to cooperate under a partnership arrangement that engenders community support, minimises project risk and meets the interests of stakeholders. Landowners have contributed significantly to the development of this Strategy and its policy directions.

Council and others in the public sector can only do so much to promote growth and revitalisation – plans can be drawn up with the best intentions for future development, but without the support of the private sector very little will be accomplished on the ground. The private sector, as part of the community, can provide valuable insight into the formulation of a strategy for the place, and in the end it is the private sector that will provide much of the capital to enable realisation of the vision in accordance with the strategy.

It is also important that individual property owners work together with the public sector in creating a successful town centre. Individual property owners are responsible for making a myriad of decisions which influence the character of the centre such as reuse and renovation of buildings as well as ongoing maintenance. Conversely, changes in the character of the whole centre will influence the success of each individual initiative.

St Marys is an active retail and commercial centre with an involved private sector whose interests are represented by a number of different groups. Since 1998, St Marys has had a full time Town Centre Manager who has been active in promoting the town as an ideal place to live, work and shop. A major street beautification program has created an attractive tree lined main street and new shopping experience for both residents and visitors.

The St Marys Town Centre Management Inc has drafted a Business Plan for 2003-2007 to continue the growth and promotion of the Town Centre. The plan identifies that the importance of involvement from every possible source cannot be emphasised too strongly, because without this participation there would be no success.

The Chamber of Commerce supports its businesses by facilitating the interchange of information and resources for the promotion of economic development and an improved quality of life in the local community.

³ C.B. Leinberger, "Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization", The Brookings Institution Research Brief, March 2005

Step 3: Strategies and actions for forging partnerships in the town centre revitalisation

Clearly, the private sector recognises the value of a vibrant and vital Town Centre for St Marys. There are considerable benefits that will ensue for the private sector from a successful revitalisation program, not the least of which is improved returns on investment. However, given the size of St Marys and its current economic position, a strong leadership role is required by Council with co-operation from the private sector, to address issues that may affect the Town Centre's long-term viability. Without this leadership from Council these issues are unlikely to change.

Step 3	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
3.1	Develop joint partnerships	Identify Council owned land which can be redeveloped in a manner which achieves Town Centre objectives, for example, mixed uses, a very high quality built form, significant improvements to the public domain.	Council	Ongoing
3.2		Involve the private sector through the St Marys Town Centre Management Inc to progress the objectives of the strategy and identify projects which the private sector can undertake which support the achievement of the Strategy.	Council and Town Centre Association	Ongoing
3.3	Establish a Stewards Group	Through the St Marys Town Centre Management Inc identify and target business owners for involvement in the Our City Centres Stewards Group.	Council and Town Centre Association	Ongoing
3.4	Integration of Business Plan	Form a Town Centre Marketing Working Group to identify responsibilities, coordinate marketing activities and to minimise duplication.	Council and Town Centre Association	2006 / 2007
3.5	Incentives	Investigate incentives to encourage appropriate development and investment in the Town Centre.	Council	Ongoing
3.6	Investment Opportunities	Identify and promote investment opportunities through the use of 3D modelling and mapping tools.	Council	2006 / 2008

Step 4: Creating Friendly and Attractive Places and Spaces

What makes a town centre truly great is its “walkable urbanity” – the characteristic that makes people find centres so attractive and interesting that they want to walk through them and experience the sights and sounds that they have to offer. Great centres are places that encourage human activity and interaction, where people can feel safe and where the full range of human needs and aspirations can be met. They are centres that provide for the health and well being of their inhabitants.

To achieve walkable urbanity there must be:

- a logical organising structure of streets, pedestrian linkages, open spaces and uses,
- a distinctive identity of the place,
- visual variety and complexity,
- an emphasis on high quality, and
- a feeling of inclusiveness, comfort and safety.

A logical organising structure of streets, paths, open spaces and land uses is essential so that residents and visitors are able to understand how the centre is organised and how to make their way around it. A simple and clear development pattern based on a predictable and unifying sequence of similarly sized blocks and regularly spaced intersections is required, as well as a logical hierarchy of streets and pedestrian linkages. Open spaces are vital to this organising structure as they enhance the legibility of the centre by providing highly visible landmarks. Buildings also play an important role in reinforcing the overall pattern – where there are vacant lots, surface car parks or deep building setbacks the logic of the town centre structure is undermined.

A distinctive identity is also an important element in the creation of attractive town centre spaces. Elements that make up a distinctive identity include the history of the place reflected in its historic buildings and landmarks, the centre's geography such as its topography and relationship to natural assets, its public spaces and streetscapes, public art and landmarks. New development and public improvements need to reinforce and enhance the centre's identity as defined through these various elements.

Visual variety and complexity are needed to provide a stimulating environment for people to visit or simply ‘being there’. Architectural detailing, banners, street vendors, cafes, markets and so on all add to the visual interest of a centre. At the same time, such visual variety should not be chaotic or diminish the overall cohesive appearance of the town.

The quality of materials, landscaping, street furniture and architectural detailing all contribute to the experience of a place. The highest quality that can be afforded should be used together with a high level of maintenance. Aiming for a high quality of spaces will not only enhance the pedestrian experience and engender community pride in the place, it will also be a tangible expression of the commitment to the creation of a great centre.

Feeling safe and comfortable is particularly important if public spaces are to be well-used and successful. Spaces that are active, visible, well planned and well maintained feel safe and secure.

Public places should promote a range of activities including informal social interaction as well as allowing for the more formal use of public space by way of cafes, restaurants, cultural venues, community uses and the like. Spaces need to be provided that are not intimidating for people who only want to congregate, meet or enjoy the space without necessarily having to do so through sitting in a café, restaurant or the like. However it is important that these public spaces are located in the vicinity of more active uses so as to ensure casual surveillance and thereby increase the feeling of public safety. Consideration also needs to be given to providing appropriate amenities (seating, bubblers, toilets etc) and ensuring that

measures are in place to protect people from the climate (street trees/canopies to protect from sun, sunny/protected areas for warmth during winter).

St Marys existing pedestrian environment

Presently, pedestrian accessibility is well provided through the main spine of St Marys. Queen Street is tree-lined and the street front buildings provide awnings for weather protection. The footpaths are wide, creating a good feeling of space within the pedestrian environment.

Two main drawcards in St Marys are the decentralised retail 'big-boxes' - Station Street Plaza at the northern end, east of Queen Street and the Village Square towards the southern end, west of Queen Street, which contain supermarkets, discount department stores and other specialty retail shops.

These two internalised retail centres accommodate the majority of shopping trips to St Marys and yet are not linked by an easily accessible pedestrian route through the Town Centre. They are approximately 800m apart and are each surrounded by at-grade car parks, which promote car use to, from and between the nodes. Although they are located within walking distance of each other, the present pedestrian environment along Queen Street does not itself attract people to walk between these decentralised big-boxes or from one centre to the main street.

In addition, secondary linkages into the Town Centre from the neighbouring residential areas, are currently not well serviced. Active street frontages are provided to Queen Street, but not to the east-west running streets, or the laneways behind Queen Street. Apparent pedestrian desire lines from Queen Street to the Village Square are not formalised and are not paved or well lit at night-time.

Community feedback has identified that there is a perception of an unsafe environment within the Town Centre, particularly at night. Surveys of community members identified the potential for petty theft, the presence of drug users and a generally unsafe feeling within the centre.

Step 4: Strategies and Actions for Creating Friendly and Attractive places and spaces in St Marys:

The success of the Our City Centres initiative depends on the creation of public spaces and a pedestrian environment that encourages people to walk and experience the centre. To achieve this, a strong political commitment is required, together with a considerable upfront investment by the public sector to create these places. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that improvements in the pedestrian environment cannot be accomplished throughout the Town Centre all at once. Efforts should be focused on a core area so that there are immediate tangible results, helping to foster community support and providing impetus to expand to other areas.

Step 4	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
4.1	Improve permeability and accessibility within the centre.	Prepare a bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Town Centre which links surrounding residential, open space and car parking areas. Identify new links where required to improve accessibility and require that these be accommodated in any development proposals.	Council	2006 / 007
4.3		Create bicycle parking spaces in conjunction with/near parks, civic spaces and areas for active uses.	Council	2006 / 2007
4.4		Provide well defined and visually appealing pedestrian linkages from the surrounding residential areas to Queen Street, Coachman's Park and the shopping centres which are part of the broader legible pedestrian and cycle network.	Council	2006 / 2007
4.5		Improve the amenity and safety of existing informal pedestrian links such as that between Queen Street and the Village Square shopping centre.	Council	2006 / 2007
4.6		Incorporate pedestrian and cycle networks in town centre improvements	Council	2006 / 2007
4.7		Investigate and improve accessibility within the public domain.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.8	Enhance streetscape	Use cultural planning approaches to develop and implement high quality street furniture, landscape, lighting and signage which is coordinated and which enhances the distinctive identity of the Town Centre.	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
4.9		Implement a coordinated signage / way finding program specific to the Town Centre which incorporates city centre branding and encourages the use of the pedestrian/cycle network.	Council and Town Centre Association	Ongoing
4.10		Install banner poles throughout the town centre in strategic locations for use during promotional events, festivals, concerts etc.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.11	Provide and encourage public art, which contribute to the distinctive identity of the centre.	Prepare and adopt a Cultural Development / Public Art Policy	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
4.12		Establish a Cultural Development Advisory Committee.	Council	Ongoing
4.13		Commission art works by local artists for installation at identified locations within the Town Centre. These should reflect a connection with the centre, the St Marys community, its heritage and South Creek.	Council	Ongoing
4.14	Improve use of public domain	Encourage the use of streets, parks and civic spaces for a range of activities such as markets, kiosks, flower vendors and community and cultural events such as street theatre and musical concerts.	Council and Town Centre Association	Ongoing

Step 4	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
4.15		Ensure ongoing maintenance and management of public domain is of a high standard. Give high priority to the maintenance of public infrastructure to ensure presentation of facilities is attractive and functional.	Council	Ongoing
4.16		Investigate ways to secure funding for and management of on-going maintenance and general up-keep of the public domain to a high level	Council	Ongoing
4.17		Focus public domain improvements on improving the health and well being of residents, workers and visitors through measures such as providing for: - increased physical activity (encouraging walking/cycling), - community interaction (provision of meeting places), - safe environments, and - equitable access.	Council	Ongoing
4.18		Prepare and implement an annual calendar of events for the town centre which increases visitation to the centre (especially out of normal business hours).	Council	Ongoing
4.19		Publicise opportunities for community use of public spaces for community events, markets and the like. Investigate opportunities to provide space free or for nominal amount for events which meet specified criteria.	Council	Ongoing
4.20	Improve town centre planning controls	Incorporate requirements in Town Centre DCP for provision of public art, water features etc where appropriate as part of major development projects.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.21		Incorporate in Town Centre Section 94 Contributions Plan requirement for contributions from developers towards public art.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.22		Incorporate planning controls into the Town Centre DCP to require active building frontages at street level to encourage pedestrian activity.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.23		Limit the location of residential development on ground and first floors in order to ensure active and semi public land uses are retained at street and first floor levels.	LPM	2006 / 2008
4.24		Identify active streets in precinct plans.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.25		Require secure bicycle parking in major new developments for use by residents and workers.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.26		Identify new links where required to improve accessibility and require that these be accommodated in any development proposals.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.27		Require new developments to provide active frontages at street level to encourage pedestrian activity. Avoid setting back new buildings from street edges, unless the intention is to activate the setback through the provision of plazas, green spaces and the like which are part of the overall open space network.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.28	Improve safety within the town centre	Allow for short stay on street parking and vehicle circulation through the Town Centre to ensure activity and surveillance.	Council	2006 / 2008
4.29		Provide for active uses to improve casual surveillance and safety in areas surrounding the bus / rail interchange.	Council	Ongoing

Step 5: Creating a Cultural / Entertainment Precinct

Cultural and entertainment facilities help to establish the town centre as a leisure and visitor destination and to enhance its self-image and quality of life. Special events and other civic activities enhance the attraction of the locality and help to increase the number of visitors and in turn the amount of expenditure. These activities improve the town centre's appeal as an environment in which to live and work. To unlock the potential for cultural and entertainment facilities, they should be an integral part of the fabric of the town centre.

One benefit of providing entertainment and cultural opportunities within a town centre is to retain people in the centre after the daytime commercial and retailing activities have closed. Night time entertainment activities enhance the appeal of a place after dark, provide a place for people to be after hours, and help to create a new identity for the town centre, whilst activating the street and improving the perception of public safety.

...just as a crowded restaurant is the best recommendation that it is a good place, crowded sidewalks recommend downtown, signalling a safe environment, and providing an excitement and spectacle that draws people to the area.⁴

Different entertainment concepts appeal to different clientele, and these varied uses can be accommodated in close proximity to each other, creating a specific hub of activity and enabling people to walk between different venues. Attracting various people into the town centre makes the place a more diverse and interesting place to be. Popular places attract more people, and can also help attract residents into a centre, who wish to live close to or within an urban environment where they can walk to entertainment venues, restaurants and varied retail outlets.

By integrating entertainment and cultural activities within the town centre, cultural amenities can be seen not as something remote or apart from everyday life, but fundamental to people's needs.

What opportunities exist to improve/enhance/expand cultural activities in St Marys?

The Cultural Development Analysis of Penrith CBD and St Marys Town Centre by Deborah Mills (March 2005) identified that St Marys has the second highest concentration of cultural businesses in the Penrith LGA with 17 in the locality (including North St Marys).

Given the concentration of cultural services within St Marys there is considerable potential to build upon this existing situation and focus on the creation of a community/cultural precinct as the heart and defining component of the Town Centre. Council is a significant land owner within the centre, and there is a unique opportunity to take advantage of these landholdings, along with potential additional acquisitions, to focus community-oriented services around a central park/town square at the existing location of Coachman's Park. There are a number of community and cultural facilities located south of the Great Western Highway which could provide the opportunity through, for example, performance and exhibition space to activate this new 'heart' of St Marys, such as the youth centre and the arts centre. Consideration could

⁴ C.B. Leinberger, "Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization", The Brookings Institution Research Brief, March 2005

also be given to relocating the St Marys library to around Coachman's Park, creating a critical mass of community services and facilities.

The Penrith Valley Cultural Precinct, located on the south-eastern corner of Mamre Road and the Great Western Highway currently provides a multi-functional community hub for local and emerging artists, youth groups and vocational school studies with the arts. It is envisaged that this Cultural Precinct would complement a potential community and cultural precinct within Queen Street itself. There is potential for a link to be created between the Cultural Precinct and the community precinct within the Town Centre to facilitate movement between the two centres, and also possibly the railway station.

This town square/central park area could also be used for community markets, fairs and civic events, run by various community groups. It could provide the location for fresh produce markets or similar events, on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis, offering a unique retailing experience to its local community and potentially attracting customers from outside the existing catchment.

Workshops and visioning sessions for the Town Centre have identified the possibility of re-badging St Marys as a cultural and entertainment precinct, building upon the existing cultural services and facilities within the Centre. Council's large landholdings provide the potential for the provision of low-cost performance and cultural spaces. Retention of these spaces in Council ownership is important to ensure some regulation of rents as land prices increase as a result of development. In this way, cultural organisations will have an environment in which they can develop, and at the same time offer a wider and more diverse range of artists and cultural resources within the Town Centre. In addition, a commercial district theatre or cinema could be situated along Queen Street, supported by local restaurants and cafes which would provide places for patrons to eat before or after a performance.

Improvements in the public domain will also assist in creating a theme to the Town Centre, reinforcing its identity. The provision of public art, sculpture and other cultural design elements has the potential to tell the story of St Marys. Heightening public awareness of heritage values will contribute to the cultural richness and knowledge base of the community about its origins, which in turns helps to create identity and a sense of belonging.

The location of the University in close proximity to St Marys offers significant opportunities to enhance the cultural interest of the town. University students can provide a significant market for a range of entertainment activities - cheap and friendly restaurants, live music venues, art-house cinemas, low cost performance spaces and so on. Successfully done, this synergy could potentially help to redefine St Marys Town Centre.

Step 5: Strategies and actions for improving provision of Cultural Services and Activities

Step 5	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
5.1	Create a community 'heart' to St Marys.	Use the central space of Coachman's Park to create a location for community activities	Council	2006 / 2007
5.2		Through the precinct planning process, require sites adjacent to Coachman's Park to be reoriented to face the open space	Council	2006 / 2007
5.3		Undertake an audit of community facilities to identify those which could potentially be located closer to in the vicinity of the community / cultural precinct.	Council	2006 / 2008
5.4		Use the space within Coachman's Park for civic or cultural events such as markets and outdoor performances.	Council	2006 / 2007
5.5		Develop partnerships and collaborations with local artists, cultural and other community groups, businesses and developers to ensure input into design and refurbishment processes, particularly of the public domain and community facilities.	Council and Town Centre Association	Ongoing
5.6		Use marketing strategy to promote St Marys as a vibrant and active community focussed centre.	Council	Ongoing
5.7	Develop synergies with Penrith Valley Cultural Precinct	Investigate options of locating activities within the community/cultural precinct that would support the Penrith Valley Cultural Precinct which is currently located south of the Great Western Highway	Council	Ongoing
5.8		Investigate opportunities for providing performance spaces for the Penrith Valley Cultural Precinct around Coachman's Park or in the green space between the park and the Village Square.	Council	2006 / 2007
5.9	Redevelop strategic sites for community and cultural purposes.	Undertake an audit of Council owned property and identify potential sites that could be used or redeveloped for cultural purposes such as performance spaces or low cost cultural accommodation	Council	2006 / 2007
5.10		Investigate other sites in key locations that could be purchased by Council or acquired through a land swap, and used to accommodate appropriate cultural uses.	Council	Ongoing
5.11	Support and help to promote emerging artists.	Appoint a Cultural Development Officer whose role will be to manage community cultural facilities within the Town Centre and support emerging talent from local schools and UWS.	Council	2006 / 2007 and ongoing
5.12		Take advantage of Council's landholdings and the lower land costs in St Marys to establish incubator facilities for emerging cultural groups and artists particularly in the Penrith Valley Cultural Precinct. Investigate options for lower rental costs or subsidies to support cultural expression.	Council	Ongoing
5.13	Celebrate and learn from local history	Use cultural planning including public art to interpret the history of St Marys	Council	Ongoing
5.14		Facilitate opportunities to interpret and display St Mary's rich Indigenous and European Cultural heritage. This may be through professionally curated exhibitions and performances in collaboration with the local community development and cultural organisations. Ensure that these collaborative projects provide support to local artists and arts organisations and offer opportunities for professional development.	Council	Ongoing
5.15		Incorporate the history of St Marys into the 'branding' of the centre.	Council and Town Centre Association	Ongoing

Step 6: Making Housing and Mixed Use a Priority

Growth in housing within commercial centres has been driven by a number of changing socio demographic influences. These influences include an increase in household formation made up primarily of empty nesters and young professionals, a renewed interest in urban lifestyles and historic architecture and a shift in the preferred housing choice from suburban home to apartments – as described by Hill PDA (July 2004), a shift from “sense of space to sense of place”. In addition a concentration of cultural and entertainment activities within centres has made town centre living attractive for social interaction. Together these factors combined with accessibility to work and/or public transport and housing affordability have fuelled the growth in urban living throughout Australian cities.

Just as households are increasingly being attracted to town centres for the offers they provide, housing and mixed-use development within a town centre has become integral to its success.

Residential living in town centres is recognised as an important element of fostering the living city concept. Local residents in a centre extend the level of activity past office and shopping hours.

Housing extends the vitality of a centre and provides a market for a variety of uses and a group to lobby for high quality public services and infrastructure (ULI, 2004). Housing and mixed-use development is therefore vital to achieve a vibrant, active and interesting centre which operates, and is safe, at all hours.

While inner and middle ring areas within the Sydney Metropolitan Area have experienced significant development pressure for housing and mixed-use development within major centres over the past decade, this trend is clearly attributable to matters such as the quality of the urban environment and the price differential between apartment and detached dwelling stock in the locality. However, over the same period both St Marys suburb and the wider Penrith LGA in general have not experienced a significant increase in such demand partly attributable to the fact that “the cost saving of an apartment compared to a house in the suburbs is not as substantial as similar comparisons between apartments and detached dwellings in middle and inner ring suburbs of Sydney” (Hill PDA, July 2004). However it is anticipated that with rising land and housing costs this is likely to change over time resulting in an increased cost differential and subsequently additional demand.

The Department of Housing and Landcom together with Council are considering the redevelopment of the Glossop Street precinct to increase residential densities and to upgrade the existing social housing stock within the at locality. This project is likely to contribute to the revitalisation of St Marys town centre.

To establish St Marys Town Centre as a vital, interesting place to live it is essential that key strategies are implemented to establish housing and mixed-use development within the Centre during the early stages. Such strategies need to address the more general barriers which exist to prevent the establishment of Town Centre housing. These include:

- difficulties in assembling sites;
- greater market risk, especially in initial stages;
- negative perceptions about crime, congestion and parking;
- noise, garbage and quality of life issues.

Step 6: Strategies and actions to deliver housing choice within the town centre:

Step 6	Strategy	Policy Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
6.1	Encourage a variety of housing choice and mixed use development within the city centre	Prepare precinct plans which clearly identify areas where residential and mixed use development is encouraged.	Council	2006
6.2		Investigate incentives and undertake further financial feasibility analysis with Council's consultants to encourage residential and mixed use development within the Town Centre	Council	2006 / 2007
6.3		Investigate options for the provision of affordable housing within the Town Centre as part of the city wide Residential review	Council	2007 / 2008
6.4		Prepare planning controls which encourage variety and affordability of housing types to accommodate a broad range of housing groups including "key worker" accommodation	Council	2006 / 2008
6.5		Work with public housing providers to identify opportunities for the provision, management and ongoing maintenance of low cost housing within the Town Centre	Council	Ongoing
6.6		Ensure potential land use conflicts are considered through precinct planning.	Council	2006 / 2008
6.7		Include in planning controls and guidelines detailed requirements aimed at ensuring a high quality standard of apartment development	Council	2006 / 2008
6.8	Joint Ventures/ demonstration projects	Encourage demonstration projects to clearly illustrate standard of apartment living that can be achieved in the Town Centre whilst still achieving appropriate development margins.	Council	Ongoing