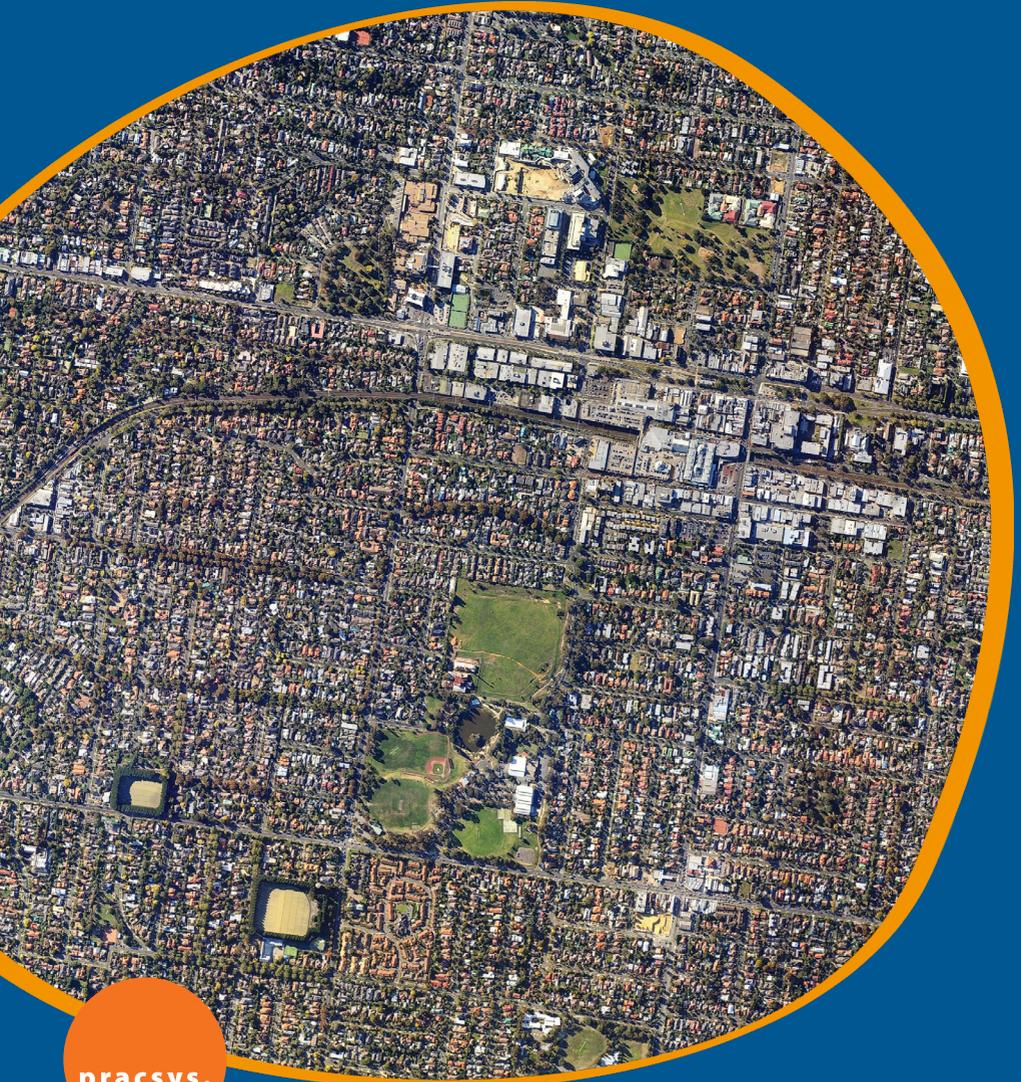


Activity Centre Performance Toolkit





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Activity Centre Performance Toolkit

DISCLAIMER

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Activity Centre Performance Toolkit





Foreword

Welcome to the Activity Centres Performance Toolkit. The Performance Toolkit is the Property Council's contribution to assist Local Government Authorities with planning for Activity Centres in Perth.

Over the past decade, our population has rapidly expanded driven by strong economic growth. This has made it harder for people to access housing they can afford, close to amenities and in the places they want to live.

It has also reduced the diversity of housing available. Greenfields are just part of the solution; we also need to have new high density Activity Centre developments in order to meet the community's needs.

The Performance Toolkit provides an evidence base for decision-making around Activity Centres that has been rigorously developed in consultation with a range of Property Council members, including various State and Local Governments, centre owners and developers.

The Property Council of Australia has been engaging with State and Local Government on issues around Activity Centres identified by members and has been providing constructive evidence-based advice to inform the policy and implementation debate.

Our engagement in this area has included the Property Council's Activity Centre Development Roundtable held in late-2011, which brought together the institutions, developers and policy makers responsible for making Activity Centres a reality in Perth.

The Property Council of Australia is encouraged by examples of Local Government Authorities who are proactive in dealing with Activity Centre developments to address the exciting growth challenges presented by Western Australia's strong economic growth.

We trust that you will find the contents of this Performance Toolkit a useful resource.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Lenzo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joe Lenzo
Executive Director
Property Council of Australia



Foreword

Pracsys has been involved with activity centre performance measurement for over 15 years. We began with modelling the retail performance of shopping centres, but as policy has moved towards a more comprehensive view of activity centre performance, we have moved too.

We have championed the use of a transparent, evidence-based decision making framework to make planning for centre growth a cooperative, efficient process for both centre owners and approval authorities.

This 'Activity Centre Performance Toolkit' is the first of a series of publications that will form the basis for that cooperation. It identifies simple, consistent metrics for measuring economic activity and urban form performance that can be applied to centres throughout Australia. This enables assessment of centre strengths and weaknesses, comparison and benchmarking, and a way for centre owners to map a path to long-term centre sustainability and vitality.

Based on the same performance dimensions, we will shortly be publishing a 'Decision-Makers Guide', which will present the decision rules and processes by which local governments can effectively plan for a hierarchy and network of successful centres within their localities. Both centre owners and local governments can then use the same language and measurement techniques to assess activity centre performance – removing much of the red tape and frustration around centre development.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the South Australian Integrated Design Commission for assessments of best practice design in Adelaide centres. Thanks also to Hames Sharley for their help in identifying appropriate urban form metrics and their assistance in developing aspects of the assessment framework.

We look forward to assisting Property Council members to measure the performance of their centres, in order to streamline planning processes and continue to evolve the measurement toolkit for excellent activity centres.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Michael Chappell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Chappell
Managing Director
Pracsys Economics



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1.0

The Need for Better Planning

1 THE NEED FOR BETTER PLANNING

“If we simply allow growth to happen – uncoordinated, unplanned and without vision or purpose – it will result in sprawling cities with poorly located housing, insufficient access to transport or jobs and an over-consumption of water, energy and other natural resources” – *30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide*.

Cities across Australia face new and emerging challenges and opportunities arising from strong population growth and an ageing population, technological change, industry growth and diversification. Planning to accommodate hundreds of thousands of new people, dwellings and jobs must involve significant research and analysis to determine the necessary steps to achieve the vision of how we want our cities to look.

The urban form we see now in Australian cities is the direct result of an historic planning approach,

characterised by centres that service the shopping needs of a local catchment but do not cater for higher order household services or a strong mix of quality employment opportunities for the resident workforce. As a consequence, workers travel long distances to work and are vulnerable to fuel price shocks and road congestion, reducing the productivity and efficiency of the city.

Although adequately specifying the level of land and built form inputs, the conventional approach to activity centre planning has generally failed to acknowledge and value the outcomes generated by centres.

Activity centres play a vital role within our cities. In addition to equitable distribution of jobs and services, centres are hubs of social and economic activity, creating places for people to





interact, facilitating collaboration between firms, attracting investment, maximising the use of infrastructure and fostering productivity gains.

To address problems associated with the delivery and activation of activity centres will ultimately contribute to the resolution of broader sustainability issues that are placing constraints on economic growth and quality of life in Australian cities.

Across Australia, many organisations and agencies are attempting to both understand and address issues

associated with city and activity centre development. The COAG Reform Council released a *'Review of Capital City Strategic Planning Systems'* in April 2012, recognising a clear need to improve outcomes in cities through:

- Collaboration by governments to improve data and information
- A commitment to evidence-based policy interventions
- Clear frameworks for measuring progress and monitoring implementation of strategic planning in cities.

The Federal Department for Infrastructure and Transport released *'Our Cities, Our Future - A National Urban Policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future'* on 18 May 2011.

It also highlighted the need for integrated land use and infrastructure, improved efficiency of urban infrastructure, improved accessibility and reduced dependence on private vehicles – objectives that are driven by good activity centre planning.



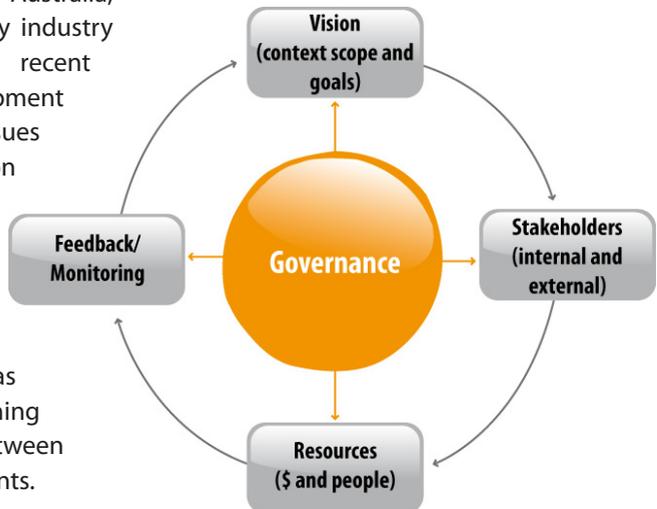


The Productivity Commission has long advocated a rigorous, evidence-based approach to public policy, and the inter-jurisdictional challenges associated with such reforms.

Despite a national acceptance of the problem, it is evident that policies and strategies cannot be successful unless they are properly implemented. This requires coordinated and cooperative governance, involving all levels of government, an agreed vision, stakeholder buy-in, efficient allocation of resources and a system for monitoring and measuring progress.

The Property Council of Australia, on behalf of its property industry members, held a recent Activity Centre Development Roundtable to identify issues with the implementation of Western Australia’s Activity Centres Policy. It found challenges associated with local and state government inconsistency, as well as discrepancies in planning and approvals between different local governments.

This paper outlines an evolving system for activity centre performance measurement that has been developed over the past five years in consultation with various state and local governments, centre owners and developers. It provides an evidence base for decision-making, using data that can be consistently applied across Australia. The result is a simple and effective way for governments, organisations and firms to reach consensus and work to a common goal of achieving sustainable, liveable and productive cities.





2.0

Toolkit for Excellent Activity Centres

2 TOOLKIT FOR EXCELLENT ACTIVITY CENTRES

Changing the form and performance of activity centres will require a new planning paradigm that considers a full range of outcomes, rather than limited land and building inputs.

Streamlining the processes by which activity centre planning decisions are made will reduce inefficiencies in the planning system.

The toolkit provides the opportunity to merge the economic needs of centres with a definable, best practice design approach in order to facilitate the development of high quality, implementable activity centres.

This system for measuring the performance of centres has been developed over five years and applied to more than 100 centres across Australia. The key outcome principles for activity centres used in this system include:

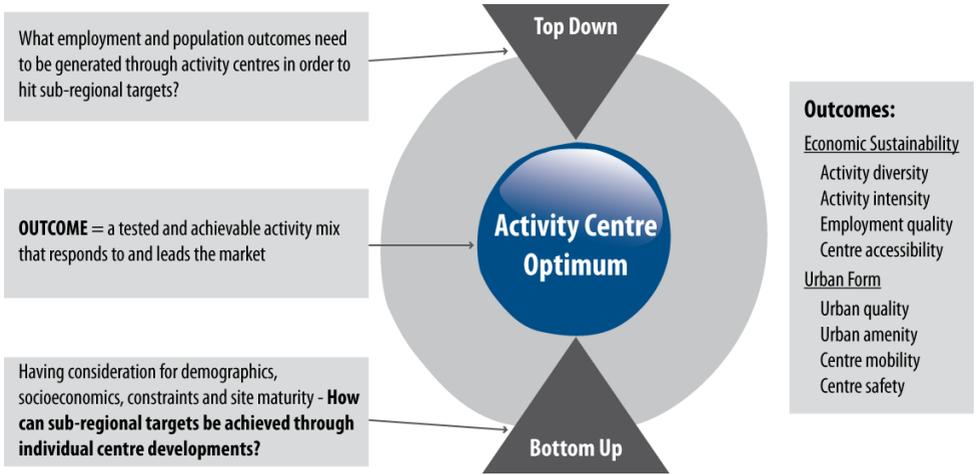
Economic sustainability

- Activity diversity
- Activity intensity
- Employment quality
- Centre accessibility

Urban Form

- Urban quality
- Urban amenity
- Centre mobility
- Centre safety





Some aspects of earlier research were incorporated into the Western Australian Activity Centres Policy (SPP 4.2), including guidelines for mixed-use and residential density. However many issues surrounding implementation remain, with developers experiencing problems with approval processes in particular and local governments lacking guidance about how to prepare their local strategies.

In the southern suburbs of Perth, the City of Cockburn is promoting the use of these performance metrics following the success of their new Local Commercial and Activity Centres Strategy (LCACS). Several other Perth local governments (Canning, Stirling and

Melville) have expressed interest in adopting the same system of measurement. The approach has also been commissioned by centre owners (including Westfield Whitford City, AMP Ocean Keys, Perron Cockburn Gateways, GPT Casuarina Square), who see long-term financial benefits associated with more sustainable and user-friendly centres. Providing a consistent measurement framework is an important step towards removing the conflict between local authorities and centre owners around scale and mix of development.

The purpose of the toolkit is to move project assessment away from qualitative and aesthetic



testing of place, to a measurable understanding of what makes an appropriate activity centre for Australian cities. As a simple toolkit, it can:

- Present centre owners and developers with a way of evaluating activity centre performance that promotes a diverse range of activities, rather than just retail
- Provide government and policy makers with a high-level framework to measure the value of a wide range of activities within traditional retail centres
- Challenge economists, financiers and leasing agents

with a new model of more balanced, sustainable activity centre development

- Prototype a toolkit for designers to aim for best-of-type for centres in each stratum of the activity centres hierarchy

‘Top-down’ employment allocation modelling directs targets for employment and housing to centres to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. A strong quantitative understanding of the function of employment and industry ensures that the intensity, diversity, quality and quantity of new development contribute to the ‘bottom-up’ operation of successful and sustainable activity centres.





3.0

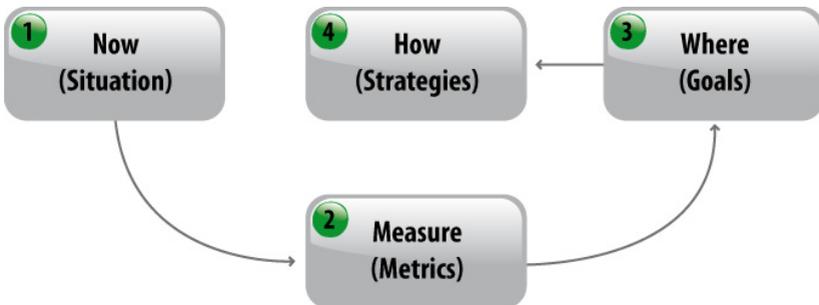
Evidence-Based Decision-Making

3 EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

Applying quantified metrics enables decision-makers to undertake evidence-based assessment of the value of development proposals, providing the foundation for decision rules that can guide the evolution of centres to higher levels of performance.

Without gathering data and measuring performance, it is impossible to identify problems and introduce improvements. Implementing appropriate metrics enables centres to be analysed, scored and compared with relevant benchmarks.

The measurement of centre characteristics produces a compelling centre performance framework that can be used as a basis for making decisions about where and when to prioritise resources. Metrics provide data useful to developers and government alike, and applying a clear and objective measurement framework throughout the planning process will take much of the subjectivity and guesswork out of planning decisions.





The following economic sustainability and urban form principles have been identified as relevant to activity centre performance, based on their impact on a centre's ability to attract and retain sustainable user catchments.

Each principle contains two or more metrics, which combine to measure a centre's performance. The metrics used have been chosen based on availability of data and consistency of data across Australian states. As a result of inconsistent land use surveying by planning departments, the economic

sustainability metrics are derived primarily from the ABS Census, using employment rather than floor space as part of the indicator for intensity and diversity.

The majority of urban form metrics have been measured using aerial photography. Each activity centre is divided into street/pedestrian way/mall sections and metrics are taken for each section. This approach allows for medium-grain features such as street trees and footpaths to be taken into account with a high degree of accuracy.

The division of the activity centre into segments provides data on specific areas of good and poor quality and can be used to pinpoint areas which are functioning well or those which need to be improved.

Where possible an on-the-ground survey is also used to gather fine-grain and up-to-date data, such as the current levels of property occupancy or general disorder. Additional data is gathered for the entire centre from reliable government sources, including crime statistics and road network data.





Principle	Impact on Centre Success	Metrics
Activity Diversity	A diverse mix of users and activity are desirable for an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable city, enabling users to access multiple needs with fewer trips and contributing to higher rates of employment self-sufficiency.	Mixed Use Threshold, Equitability Index
Activity Intensity	Co-locating activity within a vibrant, intense space ensures walkability, social interaction and economic activation. Intense agglomerations of activity have been shown to increase industry productivity.	Residential Density, Job Density
Employment Quality	Centres require both a quantity and quality of employment, as befits their position within the centres hierarchy. High quality employment (knowledge or export-based) drives economic development and facilitates higher levels of employment self-sufficiency.	Employment Quantum, Employment Quality
Centre Accessibility	Centres must be accessible to a wide mix of user groups utilising different modes of transport. This reduces the impact of petrol price shocks, increases sustainable centre catchments and facilitates movement between employment nodes.	Transport Infrastructure, Distance from CBD
Urban Quality	Improving the aesthetics, attractiveness and pleasantness of the physical environment makes an urban area more conducive to frequent and prolonged use.	Attractive and Unattractive Features
Urban Amenity	Offering opportunities for recreation and leisure within the centre and ensuring the comfortable use of the centre by pedestrians increases centre attractiveness and activation and is conducive to more frequent and prolonged use.	Public Realm, Comfort, Continuing Noise Emissions, Street Furniture, Leisure/Recreation Facilities
Mobility	Facilitating easy movement around the centre for all users and ensuring a variety of well linked and positioned transport options means the potential for the centre to be equitably accessed by a range of user groups will be maximised, and use of the centre may be induced.	Walkability, Bicycle Access, Vehicle Access, Public Transport
Safety	Improving infrastructure directed at enabling safe movement throughout the centre and improving the perception of safety in the centre will increase the attractiveness of using the centre over a greater daily time period and for a greater range of user groups.	Perception of Safety, Personal and Traffic Safety



4.0

Case Studies

4 CASE STUDIES

Data has been collected for centres across a wide range of typologies. Four case studies contained in this report provide a snapshot of how developers, local governments and statutory authorities can use the toolkit to enable valuable benchmarking and performance analysis in planning for new and expanding centres.

The four broad typologies identified are:

- 'Inner urban' including centres found within 10km of the city CBD that have often developed along a transport corridor. Their location means that they are generally more mature than outer lying centres, impacting upon diversity and intensity. These are also often referred to as 'Main Streets'.
- 'Retail-centric' referring to centres that have developed primarily around a large shopping mall, usually surrounded by car parking and located in suburban residential areas. These are often referred to as 'Shopping Centres' or 'Shopping Malls'.
- 'Principal' centres providing a diverse range of employment, goods and services to a large regional catchment. They often began as retail malls but their level of maturity (and geographical location) means that they have evolved to include a scale and variety of employment, services and entertainment that provides an alternative to a city's CBD.
- 'Regional location' centres located in non-metropolitan areas are often a key focus of a regional community. Although smaller and less mature than principal centres, they generally experience lower rates of competition and must include a diversity of activity for a more isolated community.



Subiaco, in Western Australia, is often acknowledged as an exemplar centre in terms of urban design, public transport and quality of employment. It is an example of an inner urban centre, located less than 4km from the Perth CBD.

Marion in South Australia represents a retail-centric centre, developed around a Westfield-owned shopping mall. It has a regional retail catchment but lacks a diversity of other uses.

Chatswood in New South Wales is one of the North Shore's major commercial and retail districts.

As a case study, it represents a principal activity centre, providing a CBD alternative for high-level employment and services.

Casuarina in the Northern Territory is considered a regionally located centre due to its size and function within Darwin. It has a strong retail catchment and is located between several of Darwin's major community institutions.

A benefit of the toolkit is that it enables centres to be assessed in many different ways. For example, centres within the WA activity centres network can be compared with others at the same level of



the hierarchy or with centres at a different hierarchical level. Alternatively, Perth centres can be assessed against more established centres in other cities, or against the average and best of a particular typology.

The typologies contained in this paper are simply one way that centres can be categorised, recognising that not all centres are expected to function in the same way. However, the toolkit provides the ability for centres that are retail centric, for example, to be compared with more diverse principal centres to map out a path to improved performance and sustainability.



Subiaco snapshot

Subiaco is an inner western suburb of Perth, located less than four kilometres from the Perth CBD. It contains medium density housing, a strong fashion and food main street, entertainment, recreation, major hospital facilities and a concentration of professional services employment in proximity to the train station. It is an established inner suburb that underwent transformation when a portion of the train line was undergrounded and industrial land redeveloped to accommodate a diversity of new housing and employment uses, facilitating a connected urban centre.

Economic Measure	Subiaco	Average Inner Urban	Best Inner Urban
Diversity	6.50	7.00	8.70
Intensity	8.20	6.65	9.20
Employment Quality	8.25	7.75	9.50
Accessibility	8.50	8.25	8.50
Score out of ten	8.01	7.41	8.98

Urban Form Measure	Subiaco
Urban Quality	5.70
Urban Amenity	8.80
Mobility	7.20
Safety	9.20
Score out of ten	7.73

Results

Subiaco attained the highest urban form score of the case studies, with particularly high scores in safety and amenity. It also achieved the second highest economic sustainability score, after the principal centre of Chatswood.

Subiaco rated equal to the 'best-of-type' centre with respect to accessibility, due to its close proximity to the Perth CBD and other employment nodes and the presence of well-integrated public transport infrastructure. It also achieved a better than average employment quality score, operating as a high amenity CBD alternative for footloose professional services.

Recommendations

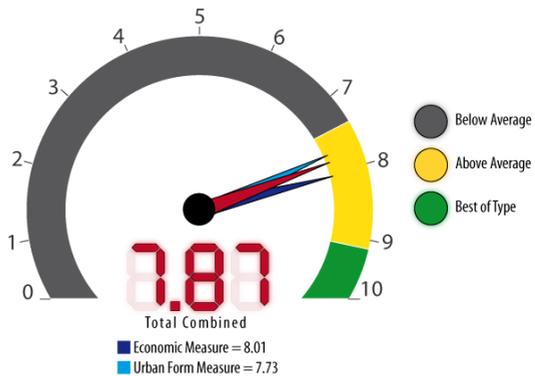
Subiaco is rated relatively poorly in the urban quality category due to the presence of unattractive features such as vacant land parcels, vacant buildings and car parks interfacing with the public realm. Improvements in passive surveillance of the public realm and providing more traffic calming devices would assist in creating a higher quality pedestrian environment.



Legend

- Activity Centre Boundary
- 400m catchment

Diversity of activity achieved is also lower than the average due to a high representation of retail and office uses. There is the potential for better links between nodes (such as community, health and recreation) and the addition of high-rise accommodation options to complement the variety of high quality medium density housing.



Improvements in urban quality and internal mobility will enable Subiaco to build its employment attraction capability. Ensuring new developments focus on creating higher intensity environments with a mix of uses will maximise Subiaco's potential

Marion snapshot

Marion is the largest shopping complex in Adelaide, located approximately 13km from the Adelaide CBD. At approximately 120,000m², it contains two department stores, three discount department stores and two supermarkets along with more than 300 speciality stores and a variety of entertainment options, including cinemas and a bowling alley. Although the centre also contains office space accommodating professional services (medical, legal, accounting, management), it functions primarily as a shopping destination for the region.

Economic Measure	Marion	Average Retail-centric	Best Retail-centric
Diversity	4.00	6.25	8.10
Intensity	6.40	4.70	6.70
Employment Quality	3.00	4.25	7.75
Accessibility	6.50	6.00	7.25
Score out of ten	5.15	5.30	7.45

Urban Form Measure	Marion
Urban Quality	3.7
Urban Amenity	7.3
Mobility	4.9
Safety	6.2
Score out of ten	5.5

Results

Marion received the lowest score of the case study centres for urban quality, however it performed well in terms of amenity and safety.

Marion attracts a regional catchment to its retail offer but lacks a diversity of other employment uses, including higher quality knowledge-based employment.

Residential density around the centre is also low in comparison to centres in other cities, in part due to the predominance of surrounding car parks.

Oaklands railway station is approximately 800m-1km from Marion centre, while in other cities such as Sydney, stations have much better integration with retail centres.

Recommendations

Marion's urban quality score has the potential for improvement through attention to landscaping, street trees and public art. Addressing vacant land and car park interfaces with the public realm could assist with both the urban quality score and the intensity of activity,

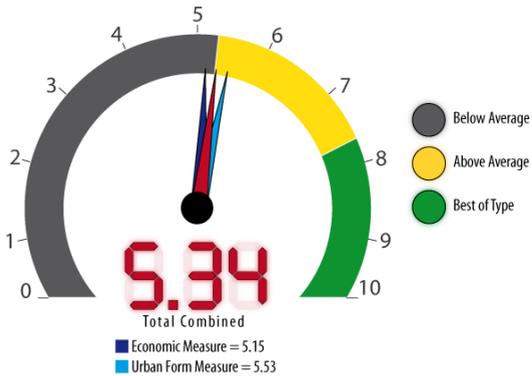


Legend

- Activity Centre Boundary
- 400m catchment

allowing expansion of office space and residential dwellings in proximity to the centre.

The integration of cultural, aquatic and leisure centres and places for eating and drinking within the centre boundaries build on Marion's consumer services strengths, which combined with a higher quality public realm and better train accessibility could attract the requisite higher order employment.



The challenge for Marion is to build on its substantial retail strengths to become a more diverse regional town centre. Greater external focus and connectivity will make it a more desirable place for future commercial and residential development

Chatswood snapshot

Chatswood is a suburb on the North Shore of Sydney, approximately ten kilometres from the Sydney CBD. Chatswood contains two major shopping centres, linked by a main street containing a mix of specialties, mini majors and smaller shopping centres. Chatswood centre is also home to a large number of commercial offices including several technology headquarters, located within a walkable catchment from the Chatswood train station, which accesses both the North Shore and Northern rail lines. In addition to commercial and retail development, Chatswood accommodates a number of high-density residential towers.

Economic Measure	Chatswood	Average Principal	Best Principal
Diversity	7.25	7.25	8.60
Intensity	9.20	6.35	9.55
Employment Quality	9.00	8.00	9.75
Accessibility	7.75	6.00	9.50
Score out of ten	8.46	6.90	9.35

Urban Form Measure	Chatswood
Urban Quality	5.0
Urban Amenity	6.3
Mobility	6.5
Safety	6.3
Score out of ten	6.0

Results

Chatswood achieved very high scores in economic sustainability compared with other case studies and compared to the average of the principal centres measured.

Intensity is very high, due to a combination of office and residential towers, developed within walking distance of the train station.

Employment quality is also high, reflecting the centre's role as a major commercial centre for the North Shore and an alternative to the CBD.

In contrast, urban form scores are lower than those achieved in inner urban centres such as Subiaco. The large size of the centre and the intensity of activity mean that external pedestrian amenities and features have been replaced with internal spaces and it is often difficult to navigate streets at peak times.

Recommendations

Quality was rated relatively poorly due to a lack of landscaping, few green spaces viewable from the majority of the centre, lack of public art and presence of a number of building sites. The mobility score also reflected a lower frequency of bus stops, little provision for

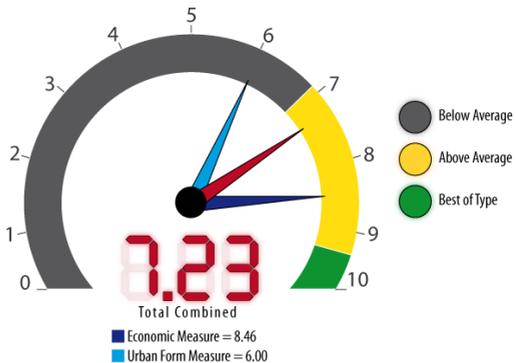


Legend

- Activity Centre Boundary
- 400m catchment

bicycle parking and few marked cycle paths. Although the train station is well integrated, the centre must also address issues with car accessibility and parking issues.

The challenge for Chatswood is to insure that the high intensity (and growing) environment is accompanied by attractive and user-friendly urban form. This will assist in creating a more inviting community space, ensure workers and residents are retained in the centre, and improve the commercial success of all components through greater mobility and legibility.



From a strong base, Chatswood can build its employment and resident attraction capability through improvements to internal mobility, urban quality in the public realm and a focus on community and entertainment to complement the retail offer

Casuarina snapshot

Casuarina Square is located in the northern suburbs of Darwin, 1km from Charles Darwin University, 2km from the Royal Darwin Hospital and less than 3km from Darwin International Airport. Casuarina is classified as a major centre under the Greater Darwin Region Land Use Plan, and operates as one of two sub-regional centres servicing a main trade area of almost 120,000 residents. The centre is the subject of a current redevelopment plan, aimed at enhancing its role within the community and creating an environment that attracts and retains new residents and businesses.

Economic Measure	Casuarina	Average Regional	Best Regional
Diversity	6.50	6.75	8.90
Intensity	4.70	3.15	6.35
Employment Quality	8.00	5.50	9.00
Accessibility	5.25	4.00	8.50
Score out of ten	6.11	4.85	8.19

Urban Form Measure	Casuarina
Urban Quality	4.2
Urban Amenity	5.5
Mobility	5.0
Safety	4.9
Score out of ten	4.9

Results

Casuarina receives a low score for urban form due to the disconnect of the shopping centre from the main street, lack of landscaping, internal public realm and presence of large car parking areas isolating the centre core.

Although the centre is based around a retail mall, the presence of surrounding community uses and links to health and education improve both the intensity and employment quality scores.

An absence of residential accommodation means that the centre is not activated at night, reducing safety and the success of entertainment uses. The lack of integration of the transit centre affects accessibility and safety scores.

Recommendations

Plans to integrate the transit centre with the core and a redeveloped public realm will improve centre safety and accessibility. Opening the internally focused mall to link with the main street creates opportunities for new entertainment and community

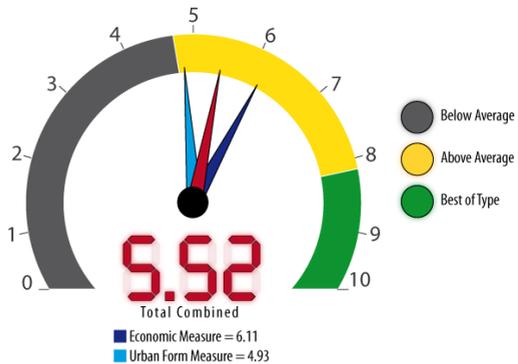


Legend

- Activity Centre Boundary
- 400m catchment

uses that will extend activation beyond retail trading hours.

The addition of residential apartments and commercial office within the centre will improve diversity and intensity of activity, and a focus on pedestrian and cycle paths will benefit links with external nodes.



The vision for Casuarina as a diverse, vibrant town centre can be achieved through improvements to the public realm, transit centre and main street integration. This will in turn attract greater residential and commercial development and improve visitation.



5.0

Beyond the Prototype: Future Directions

5 BEYOND THE PROTOTYPE: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This toolkit demonstrates how applying metrics to an activity centre can provide practical data for both developers and local governments. Subset toolkits can be developed to collate data showing the performance of activity centres for specific user groups - such as children, the elderly, the mobility-impaired or DINKS (double-income no-kids). This will allow developers to design new developments to cater for their intended target group or groups, and provide local government with the information they need to improve centres for all users.

The toolkit can also be developed specifically for the use of developers or local governments for the purpose of planning and approving developments on a small or large scale, programming revitalisation projects, planning maintenance schedules or new public infrastructure, such as parks or community centres. Application of the toolkit can show developers what is expected of them when developing a site and used to assess the performance rating of a proposal from plans submitted for local government approval. The toolkit criteria can be built into local and state government strategic plans to ensure that all development is based on a consistent, comprehensive and





agreed upon vision. Design guidelines for an area can be tested against the toolkit to determine whether they will be effective in creating an excellent activity centre.

To address the pressing need to improve the environmental sustainability of our cities, the activity centre toolkit is designed to create an urban fabric capable of ensuring low waste and emissions, improved food security, a low-cost lifestyle, a centre with cycling and walking the primary form of transport, and more.

Population health is another important issue which can be targeted by the toolkit - measuring the performance of a centre against criteria conducive to various types of physical activity for all users, the provision of healthy eating options and food sources, opportunities to take part in organised sports, support for organised and incidental social interaction, and provision of access to the natural environment for the improvement of mental health and restoration.

For more information or a demonstration of the activity centre toolkit, please contact Pracsys Economics www.pracsys.com.au.



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Activity Centre Performance Toolkit

