



Revitalising Nelson Bay

A community guide to the vision for Nelson Bay



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL



Nelson Bay is surrounded by beautiful beaches and a pristine natural environment. It is a popular destination for visitors, and people looking for a great place to live. People come to the town centre to live, shop, work, gather and be entertained.

There are some really exciting changes happening which will make Nelson Bay an even more inviting and beautiful place than it already is. The changes will sustain the Bay as a major contributor to the Hunter regional economy and revitalise the centre for both residents and visitors.

The community has told us what they want in a reinvigorated centre and the vision for Nelson Bay has been prepared to enhance local character, attract investment, and create vibrant streets to revitalise Nelson Bay.

This guide sets out how proposed changes to the Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013 and Port Stephens Development Control Plan 2014 will combine with other actions and initiatives to achieve the community vision for Nelson Bay.



The community vision for Nelson Bay

Council has been regularly consulting with our community since the 1980s to find out what it is about Nelson Bay that people love and what needs to be enhanced.

The community vision for the Bay has not changed over the years - you've told us that the character of the town centre is what makes Nelson Bay a great place to be.

The character of Nelson Bay

The community has told us they value:

- Sunny and inviting public spaces
- Views of the blue sky and vistas to the Bay
- A friendly village feel in the central commercial area

You've also told us that Nelson Bay needs a makeover and to support an expanded range of local businesses, creating a more vibrant town centre.

Promoting a vibrant town centre

The community has told us the town centre should:

- Support local shops and businesses
- Stimulate increased economic turnover outside peak holiday periods
- Be a place residents and visitors enjoy with cafes, restaurants, boutique shopping, events and activities

Despite a property boom in the region, and an adopted strategy for growth, there has been a lack of new development in Nelson Bay to support the community vision. In 2018 Council adopted Progressing the Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy: A revised implementation and delivery program (the Delivery Program) to deliver the community vision - available [here](#).

A number of actions in the Delivery Program have already been carried out.

Recent works

- A \$1.85million extension of Yacaaba Street to improve connectivity between the town centre and foreshore
- The Apex Park master plan has created a more attractive, community focused park
- The Donald Street multi-storey car park has been demolished and replaced with a new ground level car park

Funding has also been secured for car parking and public domain improvements through local infrastructure contributions and paid parking revenue.

This funding will deliver actions from the Nelson Bay Public Domain Plan and the Independent Citizens Car Parking Panel report - available [here](#).

A vibrant town centre needs a local population to support it, which requires new development in Nelson Bay.

Delivery Program actions to increase building heights will improve the feasibility of new residential buildings.

The Delivery Program also includes actions to adopt new planning controls that will enhance the future character of the Bay.





Future character of Nelson Bay

Defining character

Council has carried out a range of urban design studies and community consultation, to determine the important elements of place that will enhance the character of the town centre and achieve the community vision.

Sunny and inviting public spaces

Streets that are warm and bright provide activated public spaces, particularly in the winter months, making places where people want to spend time, for example spaces for outdoor dining in the centre.

These spaces become even more inviting when high quality, useful and engaging street furniture, trees, pavements and signage create a pleasant environment where people find it easy to spend time.

Views of the blue sky and vistas to the Bay

Nelson Bay is surrounded by pristine natural environment and beautiful waterways. Views can create a sense of connection with the natural environment.

A friendly village feel

In the main streets of Nelson Bay, buildings predominantly have two storey front facades with relatively narrow shops that encourage shoppers to continue moving along the street towards new shopping experiences.

Fine grained shop fronts with buildings that do not impose on pedestrians creates a boutique shopping experiences, distinguishing Nelson Bay from the rushed atmosphere experienced in generic shopping centres.





Enhancing character

Change is often necessary to retain the vitality, viability and significance of a place.

The Delivery Program proposes changes to the Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013 (the PSLEP) and the Port Stephens Development Control Plan 2014 (PSDCP) to ensure new development incorporates the important elements of the character of Nelson Bay.

Floor space ratio

New provisions will set maximum floor space ratios (FSR) for new development in the town centre. This promotes upper storey setbacks to maintain a village feel in the centre at street level, view sharing, and increases solar access to surrounding developments and public spaces.

Minimum street frontages

The ratio of building height to width influences how new development contributes to the streetscape. New provisions for development to have minimum street frontage widths will ensure the height of new buildings do not dominate the streetscape.

Building heights

Nelson Bay has a natural amphitheatre and changes to building height provisions will reinforce the topography of the town centre. Lower heights in the commercial centre will retain a village feel for pedestrians, whilst surrounding higher development will frame the town centre. Proposed heights have been informed by a visual analysis to ensure that important views and vistas are retained and enhanced.

Active street frontages

New provisions requiring retail and business uses at street level will provide a more interesting experience for pedestrians and encouraging people to spend time in the town centre.

Design excellence

New controls for design excellence will ensure that development gives consideration to, and contributes to, the important elements of local character.



Promoting a vibrant town centre

The community has told us that the focus for the future of Nelson Bay town centre is to make changes that will sustain a thriving retail, residential, recreational and tourism centre and to enhance the vibrancy of the streets.

Council is facilitating a people friendly town centre through a range of actions including car parking, transport and movement improvements, public domain improvements, and public space upgrades such as Apex Park. Other actions to support small businesses through business leaders luncheons and works, will stimulate the local economy.

The built environment also plays a key role in making a more vibrant place. Engaging buildings that enhance the local character provide a higher quality pedestrian experience, encouraging people to stay longer in the town centre.

Support local shops and businesses

In addition to the actions above, new provisions requiring active street frontages will ensure new development provides improved spaces for new businesses. Design excellence controls will ensure that new development contributes to the village feel of the town centre, reinforcing a boutique shopping and lifestyle experience.

Stimulate increased economic turnover outside peak holiday periods

To reduce the seasonality of economic turnover, there needs to be an increase in the local resident population. Proposed changes to building heights will encourage new development that delivers a population to support businesses outside of peak holiday periods.

Create a place residents and visitors enjoy with cafes, restaurants, boutique shopping, events and activities

Significant work has been undertaken in relation to the look and feel of the public spaces in Nelson Bay, such as the preparation of the Nelson Bay Public Domain Plan and the Independent Parking Panel report.

In addition, the look and feel of buildings contributes significantly to the future vision. A range of new provisions and controls will ensure that new development enhances the important elements of local character, making Nelson Bay attractive to both residents and visitors into the future.







Promoting a vibrant town centre

How will planning changes revitalise Nelson Bay?

Focusing new development in the town centre will provide a local population to support shops and businesses, and deliver a vibrant town centre.

Building height

Independent feasibility testing has shown that building height is the biggest constraint on new development in Nelson Bay. The proposed changes will provide a range of heights that respond to local topography and feasibility of development.

The community vision to maintain the village feel in the centre of Nelson Bay is achieved by retaining five storeys in this area.

Increased heights at the edges of the town centre will encourage new development and a resident population to support existing and new businesses.

Active street frontages

Continuous business or retail land uses that open directly to the footpath provide active, people-oriented street frontages.

Being able to see occupants inside these businesses provides interest that encourages pedestrian activity, and improves the sense of safety in the public domain.

“Active street frontages along main streets can create a rich street scene and cultural exchanges where buildings contribute to the life of a place.” (Local Character and Place Guideline, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, February 2019).

Floor space ratio

New provisions that set maximum total floor space will ensure that new development achieves appropriate setbacks and building separation. This will maintain the village feel and promote solar access at street level.

Minimum street frontages

New provisions for minimum street frontages will ensure that new development will enhance the village feel of the town centre.

These provisions will avoid tall skinny buildings which can dominate the streetscape, by requiring sufficient width to provide upper storey setbacks.






Design excellence

Design excellence requires development to contribute positively to a place. This can mean different things in different places. In Nelson Bay, this means reinforcing the important elements of local character and enabling the future vision.

New controls will require specific consideration of local character, and make reference to the independent Urban Design Panel.



New Building Heights

 10.5m	 14m	 17.5m
 28m	 42m	

What's next

Next steps

The changes to the Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013 and the Port Stephens Development Control Plan 2014 are now on exhibition until 5pm on 31 July 2020.

Have your say

You can tell us what you think by sending a submission to Council by

e - RevitaliseNB@portstephens.nsw.gov.au

m - PO Box 42, Raymond Terrace NSW 2324

For full details of the exhibition process, see the [Public Exhibition](#) page of Council's website.