

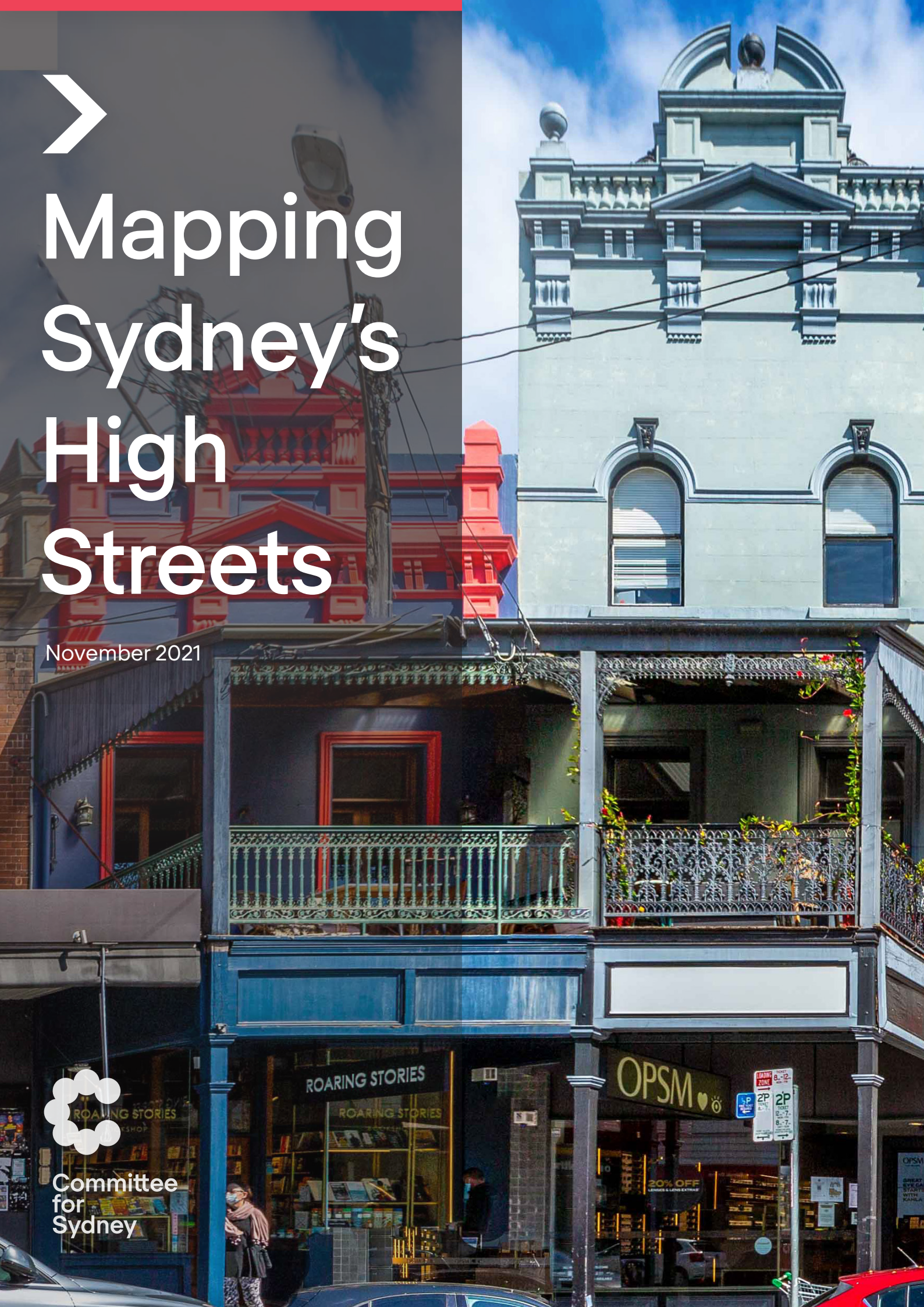


Mapping Sydney's High Streets

November 2021



Committee
for
Sydney





Credits

This report was prepared by
Cox Architecture and Committee for Sydney.



Co-authors

John Richardson
Gabriel Metcalf

Project team

Stefanie Gorman
Louis Broadfield
Matt Levinson
Joshua Woo
Laura Clarke

Reviewers

Craig Allchin
Stephen Burgess
Mariah Drakoulis
Nicole Eastaway
Abbie Galvin
David Levinson
Sean Macken
Alex O'Mara
Sara Stace
Ed Steane
Stephen Taylor
David Tickle
Eamon Waterford
Sue Weatherley
Mark Gilder

Photography

Katherine Griffiths

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Why high streets?	
1.2	Why this report?	
1.3	Defining a high street	
2	Map locating high streets	10
3	Table of high street characteristics	12
4	Findings	20
4.1	Location of Sydney's high streets	
4.2	What works	
4.3	What does not work	
5	Implications	30
6	Directions for future study	32





1. Introduction

1.1 Why high streets?

High streets have been the centre of neighbourhood life for hundreds of years, in cities all over the world.

They emerged as places where shops, churches, town halls, police stations, pubs, cafes, restaurants, theatres, doctors, dentists, banks and more were clustered together. They were places where people went to shop, eat, drink, meet, work, promenade, play and pray.

The simple logic of providing the necessities of daily life to people on foot meant high streets existed in virtually every town and every neighbourhood.

At least that's how cities developed until the 1950s, when the inexorable rise of the automobile began to transform settlement patterns, and new suburbs were built for the first time that did not have local shopping streets for people to walk to.

Sydney is lucky to have retained many of its high streets, in every LGA east to west and north to south, an inheritance from the past that continues to make life convenient for everyone lucky enough to live close by.

High streets are centres of social life. They are outdoor places where nature is alive and people enjoy the sky, wind, sun and rain.

High streets are a source of great pride and identity for the local community. That pride is reinforced when your high street attracts visitors from other places and becomes famous.

While the high street has changed in many ways, it remains an important focus for city life today.



Beamish Street, Campsie

1.2 Why this report?

This report builds on the Committee's previous work, Reclaiming Sydney's High Streets. It identifies many of the high streets in Sydney (more than 120 as of this writing), bringing them together and putting them on a single map for the first time. It is a research project and a labour of love, intended as a living document which we hope people will add to and improve over time.

We have done more than locate each street on the map; we have also built a database of the key physical characteristics of each street, and we have used our best judgement to suggest a rating for each street — from pedestrian-only, great, good, compromised and poor, to highly degraded.

The report is accompanied by an interactive map with facts and statistics about each street. Our intent is to update the map and improve it over time. We make all the information available for other people to use.

We have tried to distil a set of initial observations, which we share here. We hope others will build on this work to improve it and draw their own conclusions.

Many of Sydney's high streets have been treated poorly, as the public space function has been sacrificed to enable throughput of traffic. And yet, many of these have managed to survive and even thrive in the modern world, sometimes against great odds.

We hope this report becomes a resource to be used in the ongoing work to research, examine, protect, celebrate and nurture high streets as centres of neighbourhood life in suburbs across Greater Sydney.

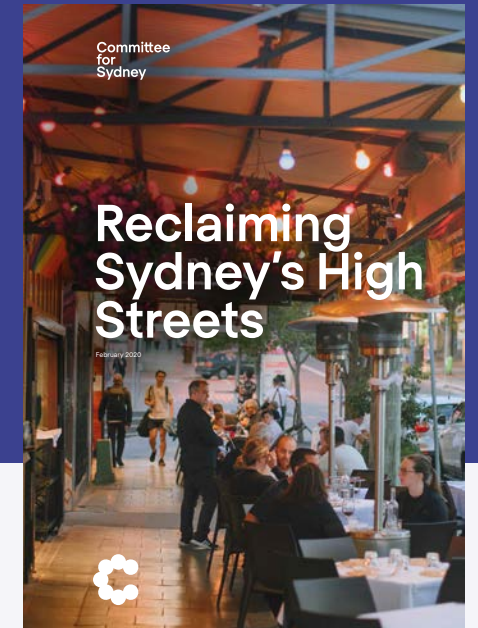
Perhaps it will even be helpful for far-sighted councils and developers who would like to do something exceedingly rare, which is to build new high streets where previously none existed.

RECLAIMING SYDNEY'S HIGH STREETS

February 2020

This Committee report offered a deep dive into Sydney's high streets, which help define so many of our neighbourhoods. These streets offer convenience, amenity and the simple pleasure of walking around and people-watching. The report called for reviving, reclaiming and revitalising Sydney's high streets and turning them back into a cherished part of daily life.

<https://sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-02-Reclaiming-Sydneys-High-Streets.pdf>



Key recommendations

- *Map the high streets*
- Adopt people-first engineering standards for the high streets
- Fund a healthy streets program
- Develop a public realm plan for each of the high streets
- Undertake the physical street transformations
- Review clearways on the public life street network
- Experiment with pilot projects
- Remove infrastructure that clutters high streets
- Change the performance metrics
- Put in place design controls for new development on high streets

1.3 Defining a high street

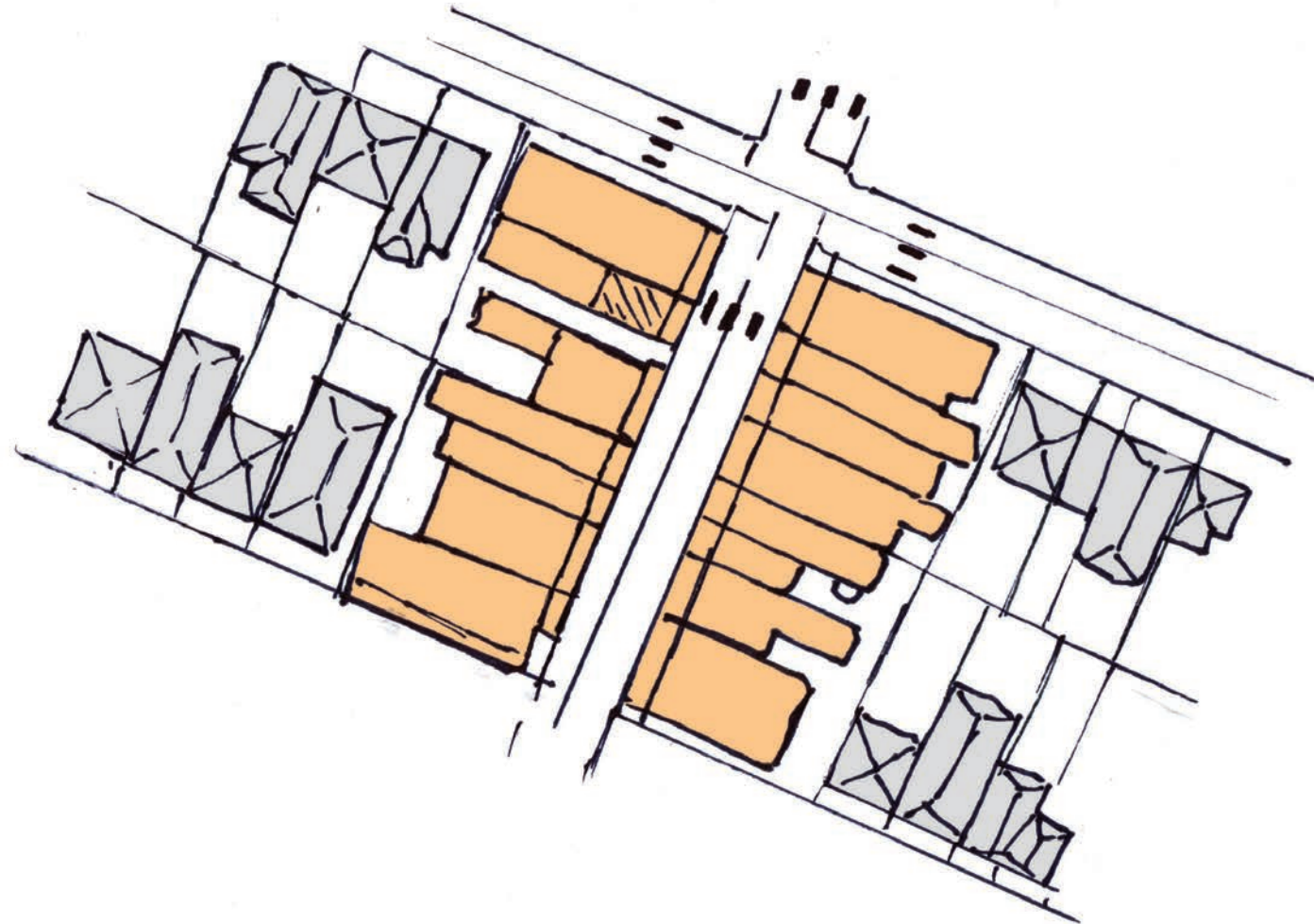
In this report we looked at high streets that have a continuous two-sided shopping street, longer than 100 metres.

These criteria leaves out many successful places, such as:

- Shorter shopping streets
- Clusters of shops or restaurants at intersections such as Fiveways, Paddington
- Larger single-sided streets facing beaches or parks, such as The Strand, Dee Why, and Campbell Parade, Bondi
- CBD streets like George Street and Pitt Street Mall.

We confined our study to the longer, two-sided, classic high streets as a place to start, but many of the ideas in this report would apply to the broader set of local shopping streets. Our data set contains 120 streets; we estimate the larger set, which includes smaller centres, would be 10 times larger.

We identified high streets by hand, using our best judgment and drawing on the knowledge of Committee members. As a result, we are certainly missing streets, and hope to add them over time.



William Street, Paddington

South Street, Granville





CHARACTERISING THE STREETS

Each street is tabled with the following factual attributes:

- Street name
- Local government area
- Greater Sydney Commission City
- High street component length
- Zoning
- Population within a 400 metre walk of the high street
- Population within a 800 metre walk of the high street
- Lowest speed limit
- Highest speed limit
- Local- or state-owned road
- Clearway
- Cycle lane
- Minimum footpath width
- Maximum footpath width
- Carriageway width, including on-street parking
- Building to building width
- Awnings
- Street orientation
- Category

31 Cronulla Street, Cronulla

LGA:	Sutherland Shire
GSC City:	Eastern
Street length:	464 m
Zoning:	B3
Population within 400m:	5,107
Population within 800m:	13,631
Min speed Lmt:	10 km/h
Max. speed Lmt:	10 km/h
Road owner:	Local
Clearways:	nil
Bike lanes:	nil
Min. footpath width:	4 m
Max. footpath width:	20 m
Carriageway width:	14 m
Building to building width:	20 m
Awnings:	y
Orientation:	E-W
Category:	Pedestrian-only

We have assigned each high street a quality rating. These ratings are subjective – and you may disagree! But as urbanists with long histories and careers in Sydney – a city we feel passionate about – we believe there is value in this rating.

Our quality categories identified for debate are as follows:

Street quality guide

- Pedestrian-only
- Great
- Good
- Fair
- Compromised
- Highly degraded



Erskineville Road, Erskineville



Darling Street, Balmain

South Street, Granville





2. High streets of Sydney

Find this interactive map online at sydney.org.au

Street quality guide

-  Pedestrian-only
-  Great
-  Good
-  Fair
-  Compromised
-  Highly degraded



3. Table of high street characteristics

	Name	Suburb	LGA	GSC City	Street length (m)	Zoning	Population within 400m	Population within 800m	Lowest speed (km/h)	Highest speed (km/h)	Road owner	Clearways	Bike lanes	Min footpath width(m)	Max footpath width(m)	Carriage-way + On street parking width (m)	Building to building width (street reserve) (m)	Awnings (y/n)	Orientation	Categories for debate
1	Parramatta Road	Annandale	Inner West	Eastern	1710	B2 & B4	12,864	32,763	40	60	state	yes	nil	2.5	4	21	27	y	E-W	Highly degraded
2	Liverpool Road	Ashfield	Inner West	Eastern	585	B4	7,079	21,618	40	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	13	20	y	E-W	Compromised
3	Auburn Road	Auburn	Cumberland	Central	490	B4	9,255	22,028	40	40	local	nil	nil	2.5	7	7	20	y	N-S	Good
4	Old Barrenjoey Road	Avalon	Northern Beaches	Eastern	250	B2	1,355	3,981	50	50	local	nil	nil	2.5	4	25	30	y	N-S	Good
5	Darling Street	Balmain	Inner West	Eastern	771	B2 & R1	6,785	15,636	40	40	state/ local	nil	on-road	3	8	13	20	y	E-W	Great
6	Burwood Road	Belfield	Canterbury Bankstown	Central	128	B2	2,467	6,357	50	50	state	nil	nil	4	4	13	20	y	N-S	Fair
7	Burwood Road	Belmore	Canterbury-Bankstown	Eastern	630	B2	10,202	14,356	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	4	13	20	y	N-S	Fair
8	King Georges Road	Beverly Hills	Georges River	Eastern	415	B2	3,442	11,054	40	40	state	yes	nil	3	5	22	30	y	N-S	Fair
9	Forest Road	Bexley	Bayside	Eastern	380	B4	4,927	13,322	60	60	state	yes	nil	4	6	13	20	y	N-S	Compromised
10	Main Street	Blacktown	Blacktown	Central	340	B4	1,450	8,914	40	50	local	nil	Nil	2.5	8	11	20	y	E-W	Compromised
11	Princes Highway	Blakehurst	Georges River	Eastern	265	B2	7,983	6,055	60	60	state	yes	nil	2.5	3	23	32	y	N-S	Fair
12	Bronte Road	Bondi Junction	Waverly	Eastern	350	B4	5,126	17,561	50	50	state	nil	nil	2.5	4	12	20	y	N-S	Compromised
13	Oxford Street	Bondi Junction	Waverley	Eastern	1080	B3 & B4	10,899	23,687	25	50	local	nil	nil	3	19	12	20	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
14	Pittwater Road	Brookvale	Northern Beaches	Eastern	225	B5	3,078	5,688	40	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	22	30	y	N-S	Fair
15	Burwood Road	Burwood	Burwood	Eastern	1000	B4	4,962	21,286	40	40	local	nil	nil	2.5	4	12	20	y	N-S	Good
16	John Street	Cabramatta	Fairfield	Central	425	B4	6,701	17,669	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	8	8	20	y	E-W	Good
17	Park Road	Cabramatta	Fairfield	Central	182	B4	4,047	17,210	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	19	14	20	y	N-S	Pedestrian-only
18	Argyle Street	Camden	Camden	Western	460	B2 & B4	450	1,306	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	7	22	30	y	E-W	Good
19	Queen Street	Campbelltown	Campbelltown	Western	875	B3 & B4	2,164	4,716	10	50	state/ local	nil	nil	3	4	12	20	y	N-S	Good
20	Parramatta Road	Camperdown	City of Sydney	Eastern	415	B4	7,493	22,819	60	60	state	yes	nil	2	4	21	27	y	E-W	Highly degraded
21	Beamish Street	Campsie	Canterbury Bankstown	Eastern	675	B2	11,541	25,557	40	40	state	nil	nil	2.5	5	14	20	y	N-S	Good
22	Canley Vale Road	Canley Heights	Fairfield	Central	337	B2	3,980	11,624	40	40	state	nil	nil	3	10	13	24	y	E-W	Good
23	Canterbury Road	Canterbury	Canterbury-Bankstown	Eastern	195	B2 & R3	5,405	13,525	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	13	20	y	E-W	Compromised
24	Kingsway	Caringbah	Sutherland Shire	Eastern	355	B3	4,571	10,917	60	60	state	nil	nil	2.5	4	22	30	y	E-W	Fair
25	Pennant Hills Road	Carlingford	Parramatta	Central	unclear	B2	3,759	8,889	60	60	state	yes	nil	2	4	24	32	y	N-S	Fair
26	Old Northern Road	Castle Hill	The Hills	Central	374	B4	3,049	9,027	40	40	state	nil	nil	4	10	9	20	y	N-S	Good
27	Pacific Highway	Chatswood	Willoughby	Eastern	355	B3 & B5	11,562	19,146	40	60	state	yes	nil	2	8	18	28	y	N-S	Highly degraded
28	Victoria Avenue	Chatswood	Willoughby	Eastern	615	B3 & B4	11,157	20,979	nil	nil	local	nil	nil	4	20	10	20	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
29	Pittwater Road	Collaroy	Northern Beaches	Eastern	320	B2	7,942	7,040	60	60	state	nil	shared path	3	5	23	30	y	N-S	Fair
30	Majors Bay Road	Concord	Canada Bay	Eastern	385	B4	2,799	7,688	40	40	state	nil	nil	4	8	20	30	y	N-S	Good
31	Cronulla Street	Cronulla	Sutherland Shire	Eastern	464	B3	5,107	13,631	10	10	local	nil	nil	4	20	14	20	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
33	Willoughby Road	Crows Nest	North Sydney	Eastern	785	B2, B3 & B4	3,562	23,951	50	50	state/ local	nil	on-road	3	6	12	20	y	N-S	Good
32	Pacific Highway	Crows Nest	Willoughby, Lane Cove, North Sydney	Eastern	1020	B3 & B4	12,687	26,523	40	60	state	transit lane	nil	2.5	5	19	25	y	N-S	Highly degraded
34	Oxford Street	Darlinghurst	City of Sydney	Eastern	575	B2	13,466	40,481	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	5	20	30	y	E-W	Compromised
35	William Street	Darlinghurst	City of Sydney	Eastern	550	B4	13,263	39,453	50	nil	state	yes	on-road	4	8	18	32	y	E-W	Highly degraded
36	Pittwater Road	Dee Why	Northern Beaches	Eastern	525	B4	2,402	19,745	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	5	23	30	y	N-S	Fair
37	New South Head Road	Double Bay	Woollahra	Eastern	340	B2	5,311	13,725	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	5	17	24	y	E-W	Compromised
38	Victoria Road	Drummoyne	Canada Bay	Eastern	545	B4	5,215	9,427	60	60	state	yes	nil	2	4	18	25	y	N-S	Fair
39	Homer Street	Earlwood	Canterbury-Bankstown	Eastern	243	B2	1,721	7,968	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	4	13	20	y	E-W	Fair
40	Rowe Street	Eastwood	Ryde	Eastern	450	B4	3,262	10,165	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	19	13	20	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
41	New South Head Road	Edgecliff	Woollahra	Eastern	560	B2 & B4	6,723	25,582	40	60	state	yes	nil	2	10	20	33	y	E-W	Highly degraded
42	Erskineville Road	Erskineville	City of Sydney	Eastern	280	B1 & B4	6,232	22,720	50	50	state	nil	nil	1.5	5	14	25	y	E-W	Good
43	Smart Street	Fairfield	Fairfield	Central	376	B3 & B4	3,429	11,409	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	5	13	20	y	N-S	Fair



Continued...

	Name	Suburb	LGA	GSC City	Street length (m)	Zoning	Population within 400m	Population within 800m	Lowest speed (km/h)	Highest speed (km/h)	Road owner	Clearways	Bike lanes	Min footpath width(m)	Max footpath width(m)	Carriage-way + On street parking width (m)	Building to building width (street reserve) (m)	Awnings (y/n)	Orientation	Categories for debate
44	The Boulevard	Fairfield Heights	Fairfield	Western	364	B2	4,399	11,562	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	7	13	20	y	N-S	Good
45	Great North Road	Five Dock	Canada Bay	Eastern	700	B4	4,934	12,021	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	6	15	24	y	N-S	Good
46	Victoria Road	Gladesville	Ryde & Hunters Hill	Eastern	630	B4	5,154	10,915	40	60	state	yes	nil	2	3.5	19	25	y	N-S	Fair
47	Glebe Point Road	Glebe	City of Sydney	Eastern	1285	B2 & R1	12,685	33,188	40	40	state	nil	on-road	3	5	11	20	y	N-S	Great
48	Pacific Highway	Gordon	Ku-ring-gai	Eastern	240	B2	9,268	6,690	60	60	state	yes	nil	2.5	5	18	25	y	N-S	Fair
49	South Street	Granville	Cumberland	Central	340	B2	3,782	9,173	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	8	13	20	y	N-S	Great
50	Waterloo Road	Greenacre	Canterbury-Bankstown	Central	283	B2	2,566	10,405	40	40	state	nil	nil	4	6	12	20	y	N-S	Fair
51	Guildford Road	Guildford	Cumberland	Central	300	B2	4,675	12,393	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	6	11	20	y	E-W	Fair
52	Gymea Bay Road	Gymea	Sutherland	Eastern	560	B2	3,723	9,607	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	11	20	35	y	N-S	Good
53	Ramsay Street	Haberfield	Inner West	Eastern	254	B2	2,002	8,790	50	50	state	nil	nil	4	6	12	20	y	N-S	Good
54	Pacific Highway (George Street)	Hornsby	Hornsby	Eastern	unclear	B3 & B4 & B5	6,764	18,451	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	16	24	y	N-S	Fair
55	Crinan Street	Hurlstone Park	Canterbury-Bankstown	Eastern	112	B2	3,000	9,892	50	50	local	nil	nil	3	4	12	20	y	N-S	Fair
56	Forest Road	Hurstville	Geroges River	Eastern	830	B3 &B4	14,125	26,540	40	40	local	nil	nil	2.5	5	7	19	y	E-W	Good
57	Oxford Road	Ingleburn	Campbelltown	Western	368	B4	2,058	5,177	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	25	21	32	y	E-W	Fair
58	Anzac Parade	Kensington	Randwick	Eastern	725	B2	8,455	14,728	50	50	state	yes	nil	3	6	30	40	y	N-S	Highly degraded
59	Anzac Parade	Kingsford	Randwick	Eastern	595	B2	7,431	19,077	50	50	state	yes	nil	3	4	22	30	y	N-S	Highly degraded
60	Kingsgrove Road	Kingsgrove	Georges River and Bayside	Eastern	199	B2 & B4	2,009	5,824	50	50	state	nil	nil	4	9	12	20	y	N-S	Good
61	Railway Street and Regent Street	Kogarah	Georges River	Eastern	400	B4	8,402	21,197	40	40	state	nil	nil	5	8	13	20	y	N-S	Fair
62	Haldon Street	Lakemba	Canterbury Bankstown	Eastern	710	B2	8,385	24,242	50	50	local	nil	nil	3	5	12	20	y	N-S	Good
64	Longueville Road	Lane Cove	Lane Cove	Eastern	355	B2	3,454	12,875	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	4.5	12	20	y	N-S	Good
63	Burns Bay Road	Lane Cove	Lane Cove	Eastern	115	B2	2,669	10,350	nil	nil	local	nil	nil	19	19	nil	19	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
65	Norton Street	Leichhardt	Inner West	Eastern	310	B2	4,399	15,768	40	40	local	nil	on-road	3	6	10	20	y	N-S	Good
66	Pacific Highway	Lindfield	Ku-ring-gai	Eastern	365	B2	2,063	7,750	60	60	state	yes	nil	2	4	18	25	y	N-S	Fair
67	Elizabeth Drive	Liverpool	Liverpool	Western	430	B3 & B4	5,924	15,279	40	50	local	nil	shared path	3	10	13	27	y	E-W	Fair
68	George Street	Liverpool	Liverpool	Western	520	B3 &B4	3,462	17,132	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	4	12	20	y	N-S	Good
69	Hume Highway	Liverpool	Liverpool	Western	unclear	B4 & B5	3,194	11,715	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	5	22	30	y	N-S	Highly degraded
70	Macquarie Street	Liverpool	Liverpool	Western	572	B4	5,144	17,616	40	40	local	nil	nil	6	26	13	26	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
71	The Corso	Manly	Northern Beaches	Eastern	400	B2	3,993	12,127	nil	nil	local	nil	nil	4	27	16	30	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
72	Anzac Parade	Maroubra	Randwick	Eastern	680	B2	8,980	17,693	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	53	60	y	N-S	Highly degraded
73	Illawarra Road	Marrickville	Inner West	Eastern	450	B2	6,493	14,866	40	40	state	nil	on-road	2.5	3.5	9	15	y	N-S	Good
74	Marrickville Road	Marrickville	Inner West	Eastern	610	B2	5,996	15,079	40	40	state	nil	on-road	3	5	12	20	y	E-W	Good
75	Merrylands Road	Merrylands	Cumberland	Central	1000	B4	6,115	15,041	40	40	local	nil	nil	2.5	5	13	20	y	E-W	Good
76	Kingsway	Miranda	Sutherland Shire	Eastern	525	B3	4,366	10,955	40	60	state	nil	nil	3	7	23	30	y	E-W	Fair
77	Morts Road	Mortdale	Georges River	Eastern	270	B2	4,558	13,450	40	40	state	nil	nil	4	9	12	20	y	N-S	Fair
79	Military Road & Spit Road	Mosman	Mosman	Eastern	430	B2	6,087	15,245	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	18	26	y	E-W	Fair
78	Military Road	Mosman	Mosman	Eastern	840	B2 & R3	7,157	16,914	40	50	state	nil	nil	2.5	4	12	20	y	N-S	Good
80	Pittwater Road	Narrabeen	Northern Beaches	Eastern	220	B2	742	5,183	60	60	state	yes	nil	2.5	4	23	30	y	N-S	Highly degraded
81	Grosvenor Lane	Neutral Bay	North Sydney	Eastern	390	B4	7,275	18,474	10	10	local	nil	nil	1.5	2.5	7	10	y	E-W	Good
82	Military Road	Neutral Bay	North Sydney	Eastern	1220	B4	13,026	25,261	60	60	state	transit lane	nil	3	4	18	26	y	E-W	Highly degraded
83	Barrenjoey Road	Newport	Northern Beaches	Eastern	430	B2	2,407	6,437	50	50	state	nil	nil	2.5	6	21	30	y	N-S	Good
84	King Street	Newtown	Inner West & City of Sydney	Eastern	2240	B2	18,218	38,481	40	50	state	yes	nil	2.5	5	13	20	y	N-S	Good
85	Pacific Highway	North Sydney	North Sydney	Eastern	1270	B3 & B4	2,872	27,011	40	60	state	yes	nil	3	5	18	25	y	N-S	Highly degraded



Continued...

	Name	Suburb	LGA	GSC City	Street length (m)	Zoning	Population within 400m	Population within 800m	Lowest speed (km/h)	Highest speed (km/h)	Road owner	Clearways	Bike lanes	Min footpath width(m)	Max footpath width(m)	Carriage-way + On street parking width (m)	Building to building width (street reserve) (m)	Awnings (y/n)	Orientation	Categories for debate
86	Penshurst Street	North Willoughby	Willoughby	Eastern	110	B2	3,781	8,798	60	60	state	yes	nil	2	5	13	20	y	N-S	Compromised
87	Frederick Street	Oatley	Georges River	Eastern	131	B2	2,329	5,456	50	50	local	nil	nil	4	9	12	20	y	E-W	Good
88	Oxford Street	Paddington	Woollahra and City of Sydney	Eastern	1550	B2 and B4	16,563	40,461	40	50	state	yes	nil	2.5	4	17	25	y	E-W	Good
89	Church Street	Parramatta	Parramatta	Central	665	B4	2,788	18,471	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	10	8	20	y	N-S	Great
90	Church Street Mall	Parramatta	Parramatta	Central	165	B4	2,276	16,446	nil	nil	local	nil	nil	10	60	nil	60	y	N-S	Pedestrian-only
91	Pennant Hills Road & Yarrara Road	Pennant Hills	Pennant Hills	Central	unclear	B2	1,545	5,882	60	70	state	yes	nil	2.5	3	13	20	y	E-W	Fair
92	High Street	Penrith	Penrith	Western	1085	B3 & B4	3,218	8,120	40	50	local	nil	on-road	3	4	12	20	y	E-W	Compromised
93	Riley Street	Penrith	Penrith	Western	245	B3	240	2,883	40	40	local	nil	on-road	3	7	10	18	y	N-S	Great
94	Penshurst Street	Penshurst	Georges River	Eastern	230	B2	4,751	15,076	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	6	12	20	y	N-S	Good
95	Punchbowl Road	Punchbowl	Canterbury-Bankstown	Central	205	B2	3,496	12,320	60	60	state	nil	nil	3	4	13	19	y	E-W	Fair
96	Belmore Road	Randwick	Randwick	Eastern	490	B2	7,088	20,169	40	40	local	nil	nil	2.5	4	14	20	y	N-S	Good
97	The Spot (Perouse Road & St Pauls Street)	Randwick	Randwick	Eastern	280	B1	5,186	17,937	50	50	local	nil	nil	3	10	14	20	y	N-S	Great
98	Selems Parade	Revesby	Canterbury-Bankstown	Central	134	B2	2,244	7,859	40	40	local	nil	nil	4	10	12	20	y	E-W	Fair
99	Windsor Street	Richmond	Hawkesbury	Western	660	B2	1,564	4,087	50	50	state/ local	nil	nil	2.5	4	12	20	y	E-W	Good
100	Garfield Road	Riverstone	Blacktown	Western	181	B2	750	3,338	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	10	13	26	y	E-W	Fair
101	Belmore Road	Riverwood	Georges River	Eastern	265	B2	3,852	11,000	50	50	state	nil	nil	3	8	12	30	y	N-S	Good
102	Princes Highway	Rockdale	Bayside	Eastern	520	B2 & B4	1,987	20,182	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	4	19	25	y	N-S	Highly degraded
103	New South Head Road	Rose Bay	Woollahra	Eastern	320	B2	1,958	7,332	50	50	state	yes	nil	3	4	17	25	y	E-W	Fair
104	Pacific Highway	Roseville	Ku-ring-gai	Eastern	290	B2	2,612	8,282	60	60	state	yes	nil	2	4	18	25	y	N-S	Fair
105	Main Street	Rouse Hill	The Hills	Central	410	B4	421	2,497	10	20	local	nil	nil	3.5	6	9	16	y	E-W	Good
106	Darling Street	Rozelle	Inner West	Eastern	766	B2	7,835	16,276	40	50	state/ local	nil	on-road	3	5	13	20	y	N-S	Good
107	Great Western Highway	St Marys	Penrith	Western	unclear	B4	2,225	5,402	60	60	state	yes	nil	1	5	24	33	y	E-W	Fair
108	Queen Street	St Marys	Penrith	Western	850	B4	1,370	5,699	40	40	local	nil	on-road	3	7	12	25	y	N-S	Good
109	Lackey Street	Summer Hill	Inner West	Eastern	157	B2	4,876	13,251	40	40	local	nil	nil	3	9	11	20	y	N-S	Good
110	Crown Street (Arthur to Albion)	Surry Hills	City of Sydney	Eastern	375	B4	9,901	28,196	40	40	local	nil	on-road	3	4	12	20	y	N-S	Great
111	Crown Street (Campbell to Oxford)	Surry Hills	City of Sydney	Eastern	155	B4	9,589	29,713	40	40	local	nil	on-road	3	5	12	20	y	N-S	Great
112	Crown Street (Cleveland to Devonshire)	Surry Hills	City of Sydney	Eastern	290	B2	8,045	23,056	40	40	local	nil	on-road	3	6	12	20	y	N-S	Great
113	Pacific Highway	Turramurra	Ku-ring-gai	Eastern	160	B2	3,111	6,058	60	60	state	yes	nil	2.5	7	19	28	y	E-W	Fair
114	Danks Street	Waterloo	City of Sydney	Eastern	260	B2	10,886	25,428	40	40	local	nil	nil	2	5	12	20	y	E-W	Good
115	Station Street	Wentworthville	Cumberland	Central	169	B2	2,898	11,250	50	50	local	nil	nil	4	5	13	20	y	N-S	Good
116	Victoria Road and West Parade	West Ryde	Ryde	Eastern	580	B4 & B5	6,188	12,300	60	60	state/ local	yes	nil	3	4	19	25	y	E-W	Fair
117	Penshurst Street	Willoughby	Willoughby	Eastern	317	B5/B2/ R3/R2	3,218	10,904	60	60	state	yes	nil	4	4	13	23	y	N-S	Compromised
118	Willoughby Road	Willoughby South	Willoughby	Eastern	240	B2	8,126	8,897	60	60	state	yes	nil	3	3	13	20	y	N-S	Compromised
119	George Street	Windsor	Hawkesbury	Western	624	B2	874	1,381	40	50	local	nil	nil	2	14	10	15	y	E-W	Pedestrian-only
120	Hume Highway	Yagoona	Canterbury-Bankstown	Central	630	B2	5,520	14,953	40	60	state	yes	nil	3	6	23	32	y	E-W	Fair
				POPULATION TOTALS:			571,074	1,281,989												



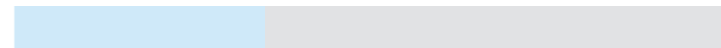
Key statistics

Average street length

499 m

Proportion with clearways

35%

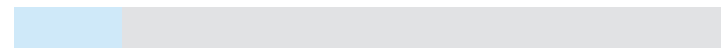


Average population within
400 m of a High Street
(5 minute walk)

5,472

Proportion with cycle paths

15%

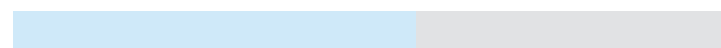


Average population within
800 m of a High Street
(10 minute walk)

14,726

Orientation

56% N/S



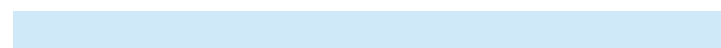
Total population within
800 m of a High Street
(10 minute walk)

1,281,989

(24% of Greater Sydney)

Proportion with awnings

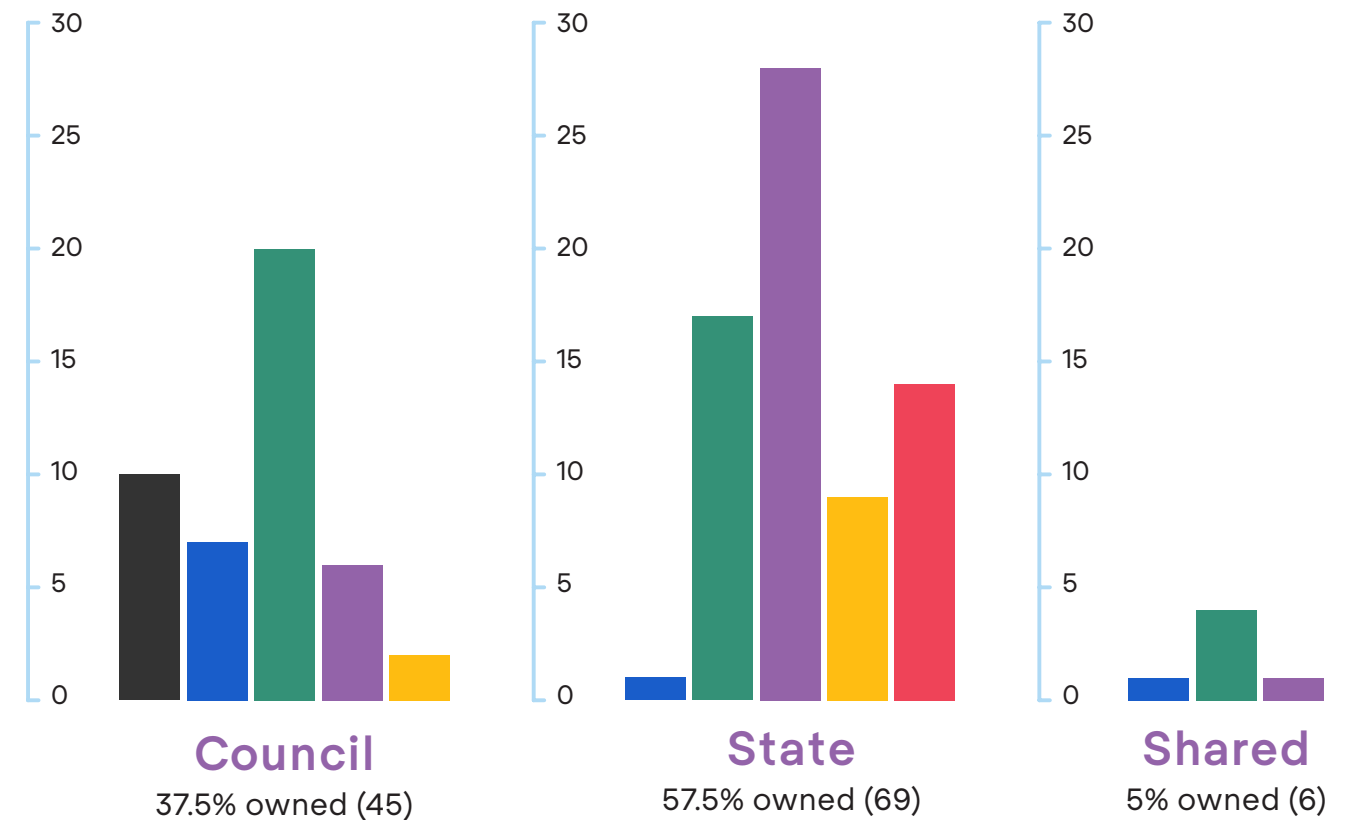
100%



Median footpath width

4 m

Quality ratings of Council vs. State roads



Street quality guide

- Pedestrian-only
- Great
- Good
- Fair
- Compromised
- Highly degraded



4. Findings

4.1 Location

High streets are present wherever the city fabric was developed before World War II. That means inner areas and older Victorian suburbs have more of them. However, they are also found in the towns across central and western Sydney dating back to the 1800s and early 1900s. We calculated that 1,281,989 people currently live within 800 metres of the high streets in our sample set. That means about one-quarter of Sydneysiders are within a 10-minute walk – and if one were to include the smaller shopping streets and clusters of shops, that number would increase.

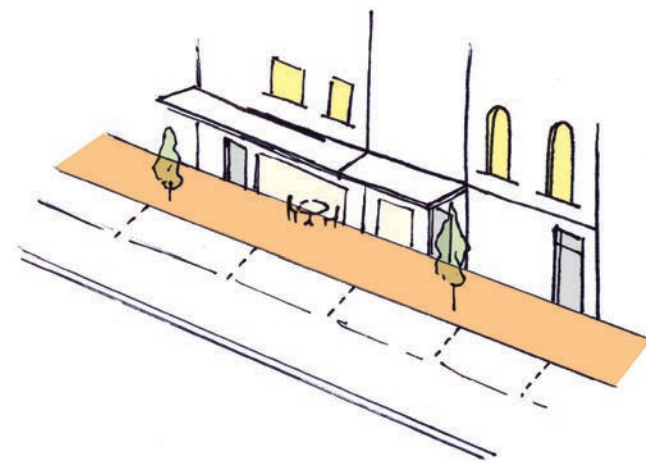
High streets are often anchored by a train station. This makes sense, as train stations have served as the nucleus of local communities for more than a century. In many cases, high streets emerged along tram lines as well – leaving an imprint from that network long after it was removed from Sydney.

Walkable access to a high street is a powerful contributor to quality of life. People who live in post-war suburbs, built on the assumption that everyone would drive to shop, do not have the option to walk to a local high street. This stands as one of the great injustices in spatial inequality in Sydney. The world has seen very few examples of new high streets being built and being successful, but we believe it is imperative that we figure out how to do that so we can retrofit high streets for communities that do not have them.

4.2 What works

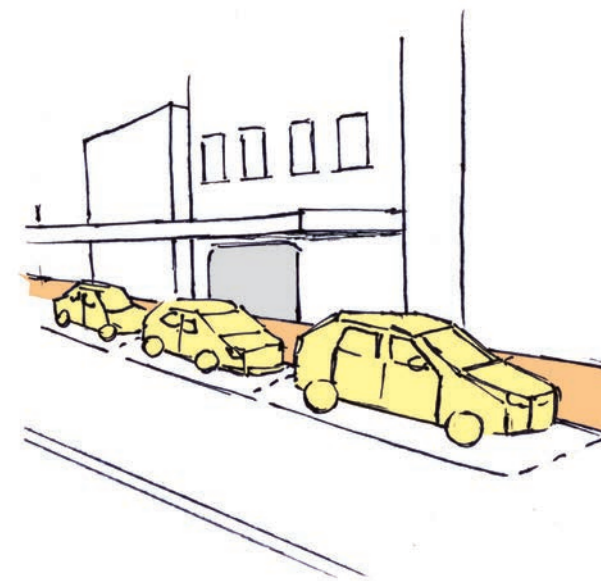
1 – Prioritise pedestrians

Great high streets prioritise pedestrians with wide, level footpaths, frequent pedestrian crossings, a variety of continuous small shops and businesses, outdoor dining, on-street parking, two-way low speed traffic, good lighting and protection from the elements.



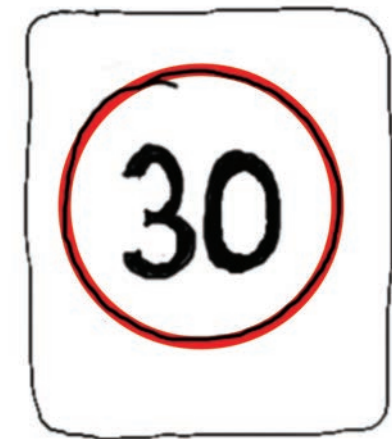
2 – Allow cars

The vast majority of high streets still allow cars. On-street parking can be a useful buffer between moving vehicles and the footpath to create a sense of safety for pedestrians. It comes down to design and vehicle speed. Pedestrian-only streets can lack activity and feel unsafe at night. There are wonderful exceptions, but generally, successful high streets will welcome the automobile in an appropriate way.



3 – Reduce speed

The best streets have speed limits of 30 to 40 km per hour. The slower the traffic speed, the more attractive the street is for pedestrians. There is a global move to 30 km per hour speed limits on local streets. Preferably traffic is calmed not just by speed limit signs, but by narrow two-way carriageways, on-street parked cars, pedestrian crossings, tight kerb corners and trees close to the kerb.

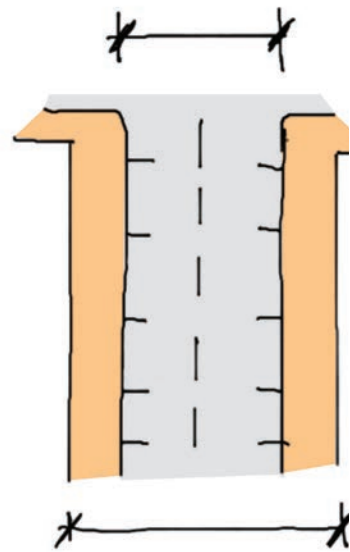


Beamish Street, Campsie



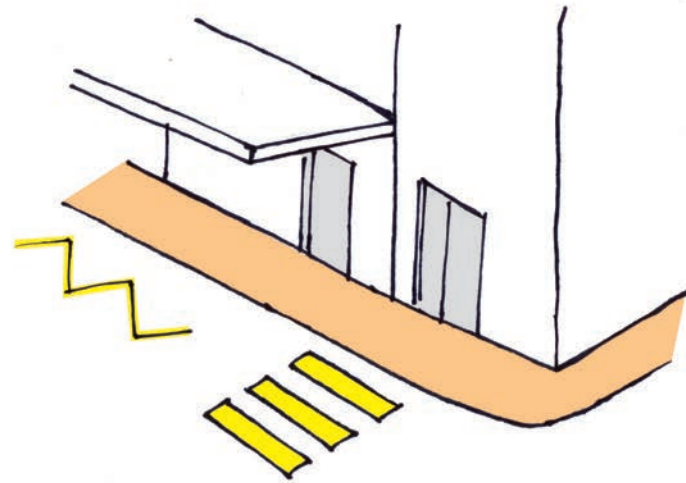
4 – Narrow carriageways

Most successful high streets have wide footpaths and narrow carriageways. We observe that a typical carriageway would be 12 metres wide which provides room for on street parking. (Most successful high streets historically have a 20 metres building edge to building edge road reservation.) Traditional road reserves were 1 chain or 66 feet wide. Narrow carriageways and tight radius kerbs slow traffic and enhance the pedestrian environment. Wide medians and frequent places to cross, are also helpful.



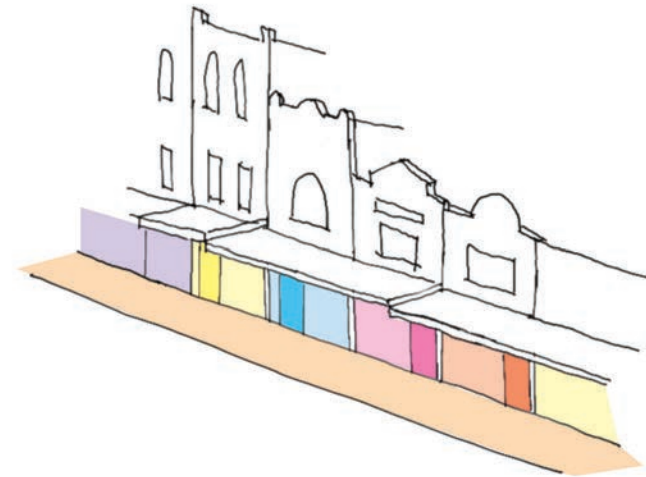
5 – Frequent pedestrian crossings

Successful high streets have many pedestrian crossings. This facilitates a flow back and forth, and shortens walking distances. It also helps to calm traffic.



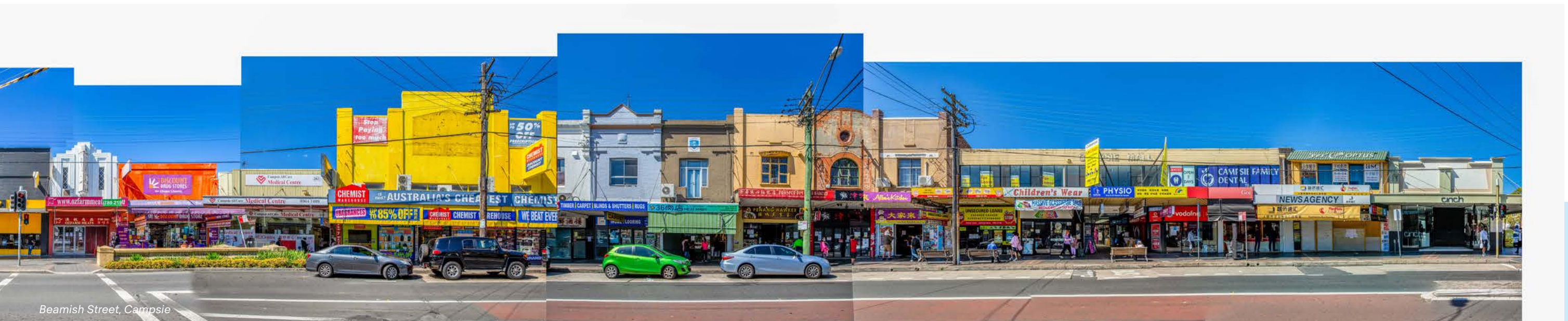
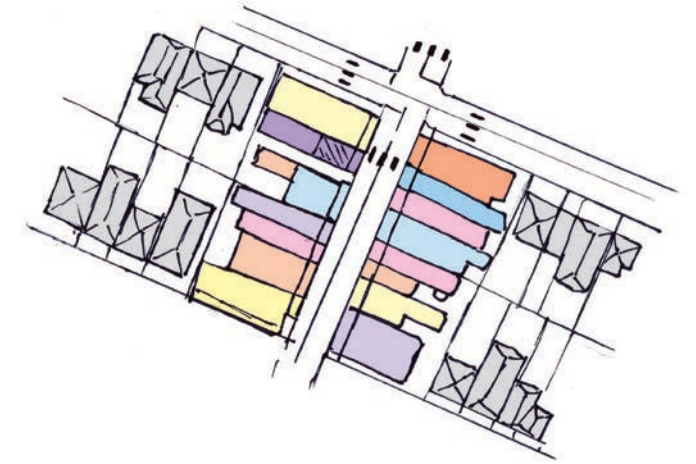
6 – Continuous retail

Continuous small shops and businesses fronting the streets with activity spilling out onto the footpath work. This is the pattern of traditional high streets. Victorian and Federation high streets have a distinctive heritage advantage, with buildings of character, colour, elegance, fine detail and a comfortable scale. One of the most common problems with newer buildings on high streets is that they create single tenancies that are too wide instead of providing a diversity of small shopfronts. Blurring the indoors and outdoors can create a high street market experience.



7 – Critical mass of local customers

High streets need a critical mass of businesses and population. High streets work best with a density of activity attractive to visitors, and surrounding walkable residential uses that establish a local community. Some high streets are destinations in the sense that people from outside the area travel to them, but most rely on a local population walking to them. In our sample set, the average population within 800 metres of the high streets is 15,000. All the high streets we identified have a business zoning.

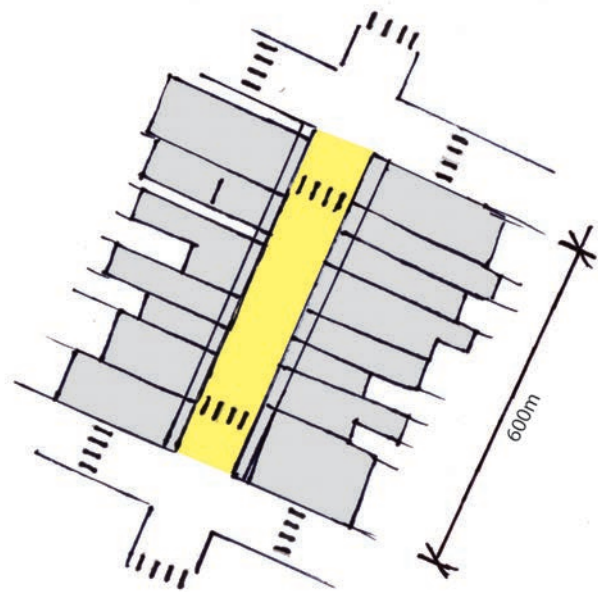


Beamish Street, Campsie



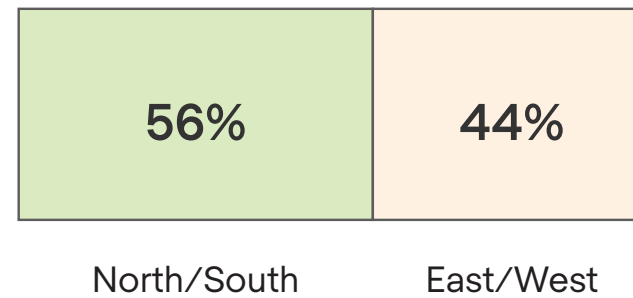
8 – Relatively short

Most high streets are relatively short. This means one can stroll both sides of the street. However, there are exceptions, such as King Street in Newtown. Some streets, such as Crown Street, Surry Hills, have distinct segments of high street places, separated at various locations along the street by other uses. Few successful high streets exceed 600 metres in length.



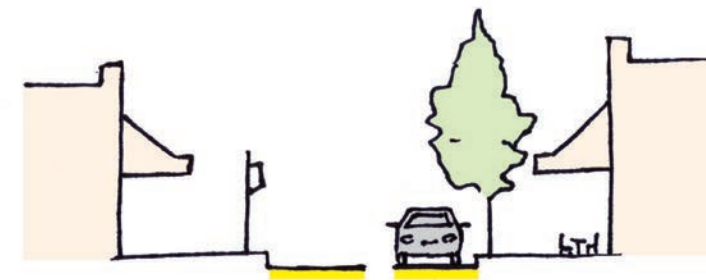
9 – North/South orientation

North/south orientation maximises solar access for the enjoyment of people, particularly in colder months when the sun shines for 10 hours a day. Shade can always be provided in summer when the sun shines for 14 hours a day. Cafes enjoy the morning, restaurants and bars enjoy the afternoon.



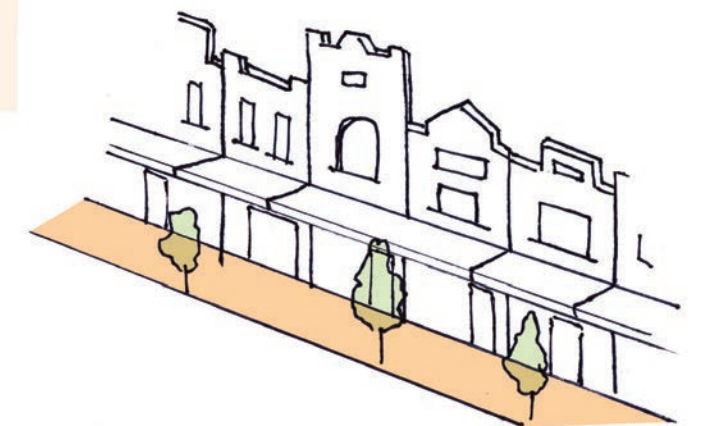
10 – Awnings

All the functioning streets have awnings. This appears to be an essential part of the Sydney building vernacular, and provides protection from the rain. (Many earlier Victorian and Federation streets actually had verandas off the second floor, which were later replaced by awnings.) Wider footpaths can sometimes accommodate awnings and trees. But where possible, an even better treatment is to put trees into the kerbside parking lane.



11 – Victorian buildings

Many successful high streets are lined with Victorian two-storey buildings, creating an attractive, human scale and sunny environment. This may simply be an artefact of the era when high streets were originally developed, or it may be a design principle that is important to remember for future developments outside major CBDs and town centres. Tall development on the footpath may create windy environments, may create an inhuman scale and reduce solar access to high streets, although there are clearly examples of great pedestrian environments with tall buildings, such as George Street through Sydney's CBD.



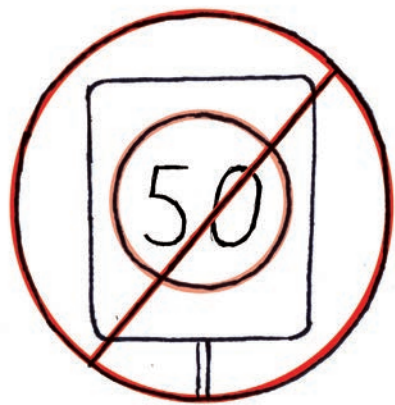
Darling Street, Balmain



4.3 What does not work

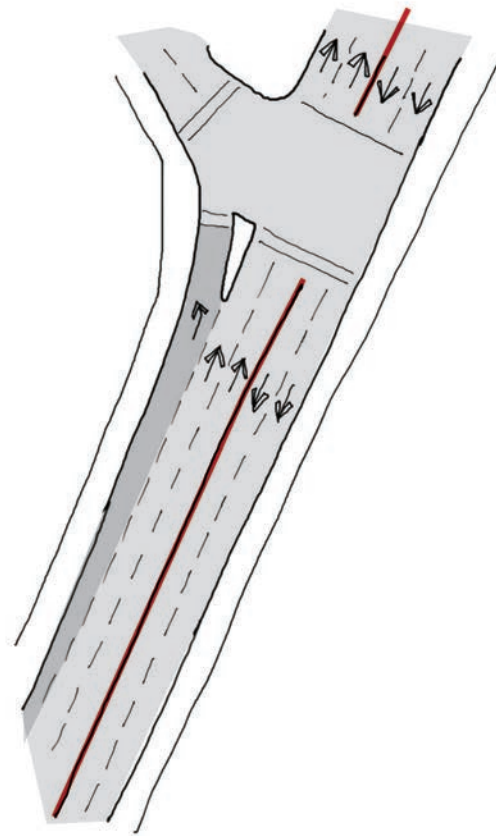
1 – Speeds over 40 km/hour

High speed traffic, probably any traffic over 40 km per hour, makes high streets fail. This presents perhaps the single biggest challenge to Sydney's high streets: many are on roads that have been designated as 'State Roads' where decisions about speed and street design are often made to maximise throughput of traffic rather than to make good public places.



2 – Slip lanes

Clearways, slip lanes, wide carriageways, median fences and broad kerb turns at corners create 'roads' not 'streets' by encouraging vehicle speed. We found only two successful high streets in all of Greater Sydney that have clearways. Fences, which are an attempt to protect pedestrians from fast traffic, discourage crossing the street and encourage cars to go even faster.



3 – Clearways

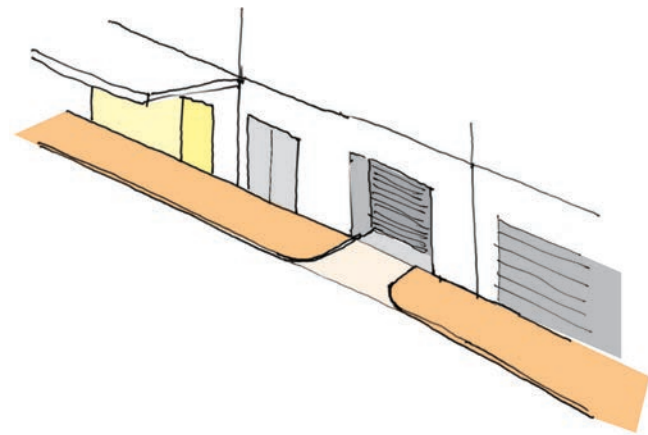
Absence of on-street parking diminishes the pedestrian experience and reduces safety. Some high streets would benefit greatly from the simple change of ending the clearway and replacing it with permanent on-street parking. Moreover, once the clearway is removed, the opportunity exists to upgrade streets with tree plantings in the kerb lane, as well as activations like putting out tables and chairs.





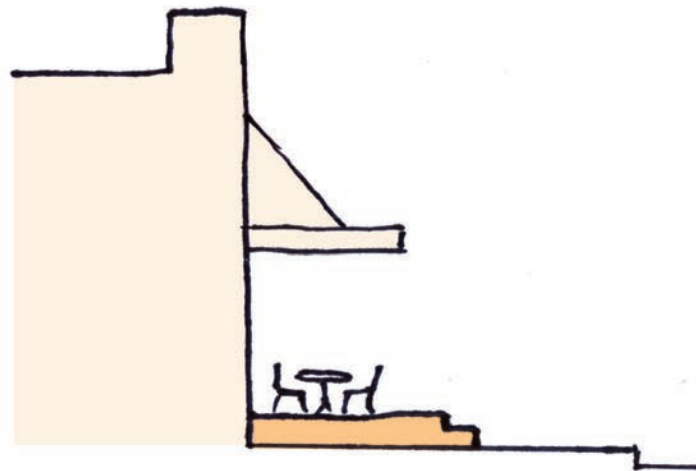
4 – Car park crossings

Blank walls, car park crossovers and inactive building frontages do not work on high streets. Recesses on the street frontage create unsafe places without proper surveillance. Newer buildings on high streets that lack ground floor retail entirely, are equally damaging. High streets need the visual variety of continuous small shopfronts.



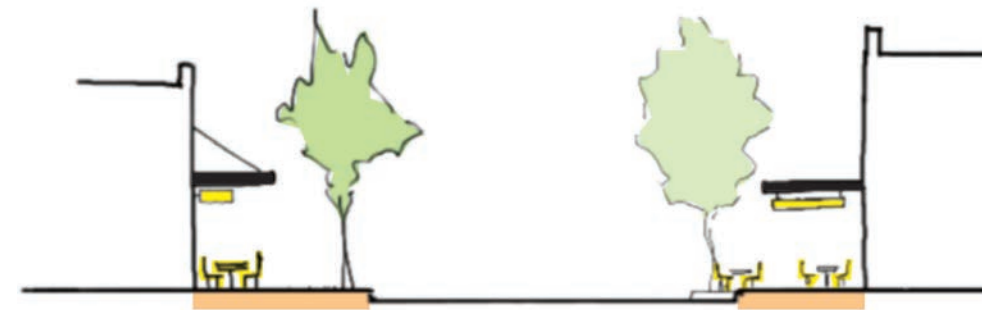
5 – Raised frontages

Shop frontages raised above the footpath levels for flood control or other purposes discourage street activity, unless the frontages have outdoor dining areas above the footpath. This affects flood-prone streets such as Barrenjoey Road at Newport and Anzac Parade at Kensington.



6 – Absence of places to sit

An absence of places to sit, dwell and watch the passing parade diminishes the high street experience. Where the footpath is only wide enough for pedestrian movement, but not lingering, the high street will be degraded.



Argyle Street, Camden



Argyle Street, Camden



5. Implications

Most high streets can be improved. This should be one of the great aims of city planning across Greater Sydney. Strategic plans, local strategic planning statements, and precinct plans should all work to support high streets through public realm improvements and the form controls on new development.

Special high street development controls can be created to make sure new development on high streets contributes to the overall pattern. These would require tall floor-to-ceiling heights, transparency, activation and frequent shopfront doors.

The single easiest thing to do to support healthy high streets would be to make the speed limit 30 km per hour. Cities all over the world are doing this, and so should Sydney. Traffic can go fast in many locations but in high streets everything needs to slow down.

Removing clearways from high streets is important. We acknowledge that on some streets this will have an impact on bus operations. In some cases, there can be another solution for the bus – a different routing, a different strategy for managing traffic speeds, a true centre-running rapid bus treatment, or something else.

Trees can conflict with shop and cross-street visibility. Unless the footpaths are quite wide, the best solution might be to put the trees in the parking lane of the road, a common treatment. Rain protecting awnings take precedence over trees on high streets. In some cases, trees can be located on medians.



Erskineville Road, Erskineville

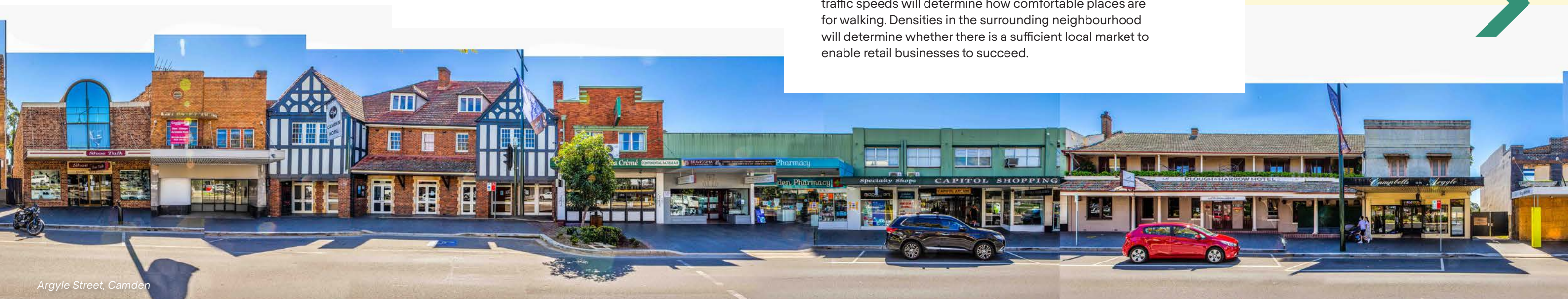
Housing over retail can be a form of conflict. High street activity, particularly later at night, can disrupt residents' desire for quiet. On the other hand, this 'conflict' has been successfully negotiated by cities forever.

There are not a lot of examples of new high streets that have succeeded. Perhaps the town centre at Rouse Hill is a good example, but these are quite rare. In fact, in many cases the current rules on development prevent high streets from being built – requiring setbacks, allowing building frontages that are too wide, requiring roads that are too wide, and so on. We think this is a critical matter for planning in Sydney: we need to be able to create new neighbourhoods that provide the ability for residents to walk to a local shopping street. We hope some of the principles of what works and what doesn't work from this project will help governments and developers create new places that work.



South Street, Granville

Western Sydney provides a key opportunity to include new high streets. As new development is planned in Western Sydney, the design and planning decisions we make today will determine whether or not people have the opportunity to walk to local shopping streets in the future. Precinct plans will determine if there are outdoor shopping streets or not. Development controls will determine if buildings on those shopping streets provide for variety and interest. Street widths, footpath widths and traffic speeds will determine how comfortable places are for walking. Densities in the surrounding neighbourhood will determine whether there is a sufficient local market to enable retail businesses to succeed.



Argyle Street, Camden



6. Directions for future study

The focus of this report has been the physical facts and metrics of the identified high streets. Future research should be undertaken on these physical attributes and on the complex socio-economic matters that drive high street success.

We hope other people will use the dataset we have created, improve on it, and come up with new and better ways to use it.

Some specific topics we hope people will explore include:

The services and land uses that drive high streets.

Associated activity, such as supermarkets, railway stations, bus stops, schools and community facilities could be mapped. Local and regional shopping attractions, community attractions, variety, retail mix, critical mass, day and night, and high street location characteristics need to be understood. As Australian society follows the UK and the USA to increase rates of online shopping (and home delivery), it will be important to understand what mix of uses is most likely to be successful on local shopping streets in the future.

Economic indicators of the health of high streets.

Vacancies, rents, ownership profiles, leasing profiles and economic performance would deepen our understanding of the streets and of the socio-economic value of high streets on places, local economies and property values.

Demographic data.

A deeper understanding about how density and population characteristics within the catchments around various high streets impacts their performance.

Smaller nodes of commercial activity.

Our study defined a minimum threshold of 100 metres of retail on both sides of the street. But there are smaller clusters, sometimes even just an intersection, or T streets, one sided streets, 'vertical' to arterial streets, that serve a similar function for supporting public life, and could perhaps be developed further to bring the great joy of living near a high street to more Sydneysiders. These smaller nodes provide amenity today, and in some cases could form the nucleus of greater concentrations of shops or services in the future.

Improvements to the quality ratings, hierarchies and definitions.

We used our best judgement, but this will benefit from other people using quantitative methods, such as pedestrian counts and retail turnover statistics. The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's 'Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life' and the Transport for NSW / Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's place intensity methodology would also be great tools to use for this.

Refinements to the street typology.

We classified streets as state or local, but a more sophisticated street typology would be better. High streets on roads carrying large traffic volumes are going to be a lot harder to repair than streets with smaller traffic volumes. High streets within major town centres work differently from high streets surrounded by residential fabric. A more sophisticated street typology will help us target our interventions to support healthier streets.

Case studies.

In-depth studies of specific streets – of all levels of success and quality – would be revealing.

Finally, we think there is a role for government to do more with mapping high streets:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) should produce maps and data on clusters of retail business activity.

The UK Office of National Statistics has done this to great effect, as a tool to support policy to strengthen high streets and neighbourhood businesses. Relying on the algorithms of mapping programs to generate clusters of retail business activity would yield a different map and would enable well-targeted policy interventions to support important local places.

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment should create an official map of high streets.

This is one of the key recommendations coming out of our first high street report. Having an official map enables government to treat high streets differently – to adopt specific policies with regard to clearways, traffic speeds, parking, and the form controls on new development. Recognising high streets as distinctive, special places would help government to support them to be successful.

ON THE HIGH STREETS FUNDING PROGRAMS

In 2020, the NSW Government launched two \$15 million grant programs, Streets as Shared Spaces and Your High Street, offering funding to councils to improve their streets. The programs aim to empower councils to take a creative approach in their streets and activate them.

The programs support the Premier's Priority to increase the proportion of homes in urban areas across NSW within 10 minutes' walk of quality green, open and public space.

Councils across NSW have used the grants to enhance their streets in various ways, including slowing speeds with footpath widening, additional crossing points, speed reductions and shared zones, reallocating road space for seating, outdoor dining and pop-up cycleways, creating new and improved public spaces with urban greening, seating and public art, and programming and activations.

Launched in May 2020, the \$15 million Streets as Shared Spaces program is supporting 52 temporary and pilot projects across the state. The program was designed to support physical distancing requirements and encourage safe social connection, in response to Covid-19. Two types of grants were on offer:

- 1) up to \$100,000 for short-term projects that pilot or incubate changes to streets
- 2) up to \$1 million for medium-term projects that pilot improvements or activation of streets as shared public spaces

Taking a tactical urbanism approach, the projects aim to test and demonstrate ideas, building the case for more permanent change.

Fairfield City Council transformed the Cabramatta and Fairfield town centres with temporary pop-up parklets, turf, synthetic grass and seating, children's yoga classes, live DJ, public art and decorative lighting from November to December 2020. The projects aimed to provide new and unexpected opportunities for residents to stop, relax, rest, socialise and linger longer. The Cabramatta project saw roughly double the number of pedestrians during the pop-up, and an increase in people visiting the space on foot at night.

The resounding success of the Streets as Shared Spaces program led to the NSW Government launching the \$15 million Your High Street program later in the year. The program offered funding to councils of up to \$1 million for projects that permanently improve the amenity and function of high streets, increasing use over day and night, footfall, local accessibility and connections, and safety and comfort. Funding was awarded to 18 councils, including seven councils in Greater Sydney.

City of Parramatta Council is using their funding to make permanent the successful Streets as Shared Spaces trial in Phillip Lane, and to revitalise Phillip Street in the CBD into a 'Smart Street.' The vision of Phillip Street Smart Street was an entry in the Committee's Public Space Ideas Competition. The realisation of this idea will include footpath widening to create capacity for outdoor dining, condition-responsive lighting, street furniture with built-in USB ports, smart irrigation, surveillance, public artwork and lighting.





Beamish Street, Campsie

References

NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Streets as Shared Spaces Program,
<https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets/streets-as-shared-spaces-program>

NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Streets as Shared Spaces Successful Applicants,
https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/347013/SASS-Grants-successful-applicants.pdf

NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Your High Street Program,
<https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets/grants-for-councils>

Georges River Council – Hurstville Forest in the City,
<https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/About-Your-Council/Publications/Media/Hurstville-Forest-in-the-City>

Georges River Council – Hurstville Streets as Shared Spaces Cleansing Program,
<https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/About-Your-Council/ Publications/ Media/ Hurstville-Streets-as-Shared-Spaces-and-Deep-Clean>

City of Parramatta – Placemaking Projects,
<https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/council/place-management/placemaking-projects>

Public Space Ideas Competition – Phillip Street, Smart Street, Parramatta,
<https://sydney.org.au/psic/entry/phillip-street-smart-street-parramatta/>

Innovation Fund Partners

We would like to thank our Innovation Fund Partners for their support of Committee for Sydney’s research.




Our Innovation Fund Partners are future focused, and outcome driven. They are leaders of change. Their combined investment underpins our annual research program and together with our members, enables us to grow our impact and output – striving to create a better Sydney that offers unparalleled opportunity and quality of life for everyone.





Keep in touch

Committee for Sydney
sydney.org.au

-  @Committee4Syd
-  committee@sydney.org.au
-  +61 2 8320 6750