



Sydney2030/**Green/Global/Connected**

CITY OF SYDNEY  

# George Street 2020

## A Public Domain Activation Strategy

*city of villages*

Adopted 10 August 2015

# George Street 2020

## A Public Domain Activation Strategy

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# 01

# Revitalising George Street

## 1.1 Our vision for George Street

**By 2020 George Street will be transformed into Sydney's new civic spine as part of the CBD light rail project. It will be a high quality pedestrian boulevard, linking Sydney's future squares and key public spaces.**

This transformation is a unique opportunity for the City to maximise people's enjoyment of the street, add vibrancy to the area and support retail and the local economy. This strategy plans for elements in the public domain as well as building edges and building uses to contribute to the success of George Street.

New activities may include outdoor dining, vending, creative or cultural activities or simply improving the comfort of pedestrians encouraging people to walk, stroll or linger and enjoy George Street.

Public domain elements include fixed items such as public seating, lighting and street trees, and temporary elements such as moveable furniture, outdoor dining, and street vending. This strategy does not program temporary uses or activities, but sets the stage for coordinated and high-quality outcomes.

Building uses, particularly those associated with the street level, help activate the street by including public amenities and a fine grain, diverse offering of goods, services and attractions.

Building elements including awnings, signage and materiality contribute to the pedestrian experience of George Street.

This strategy identifies principles and opportunities relating to these elements, and makes recommendations for the design of George Street as well as policy and projects to contribute to the ongoing use and experience of the street.

The City's investment in the light rail project is supported by long-term commitments to upgrading the connecting public domain. Sustainable Sydney 2030 outlines a vision for three linked squares and vibrant city laneways. Existing spaces such as Barrack and Regimental Square, and Martin Place, also provide important opportunities to support activity along George Street. These spaces will be the subject of future analysis and concept development.





Figure 1 - Illustrative view - George Street at Martin Place

## 1.2 The Concept Design

Our concept for George Street is guided by the following principles:

- 01 An efficient transport spine**
- 02 A pedestrian focused boulevard**
- 03 A legible spine**
- 04 An iconic street**
- 05 A 24 hour street**
- 06 Linking the city to the harbour**
- 07 Connecting three great squares**

In September 2013, Council endorsed the George Street Concept Design, which details public domain improvements along George Street and its adjacent spaces. This concept has been conceived alongside the NSW State Government's light rail project. This identifies George Street as the north-south route through the city centre.

In December 2013 the City entered into an agreement with the NSW State Government to deliver the George Street light rail project. The City continues to work with Transport for NSW to ensure the best possible outcome, with a focus on a high quality public domain for George Street.

## 1.3 Policy Framework

The transformation of George Street is catalysed by NSW State Government's light rail project. The light rail and associated upgrade of George Street delivers on a range of State plans and policies, including:

- **NSW 2021**
- **Long Term Transport Masterplan**
- **Sydney City Centre Access Strategy**
- **Sydney's Walking Future**
- **Sydney's Cycling Future**
- **A Plan for Growing Sydney**



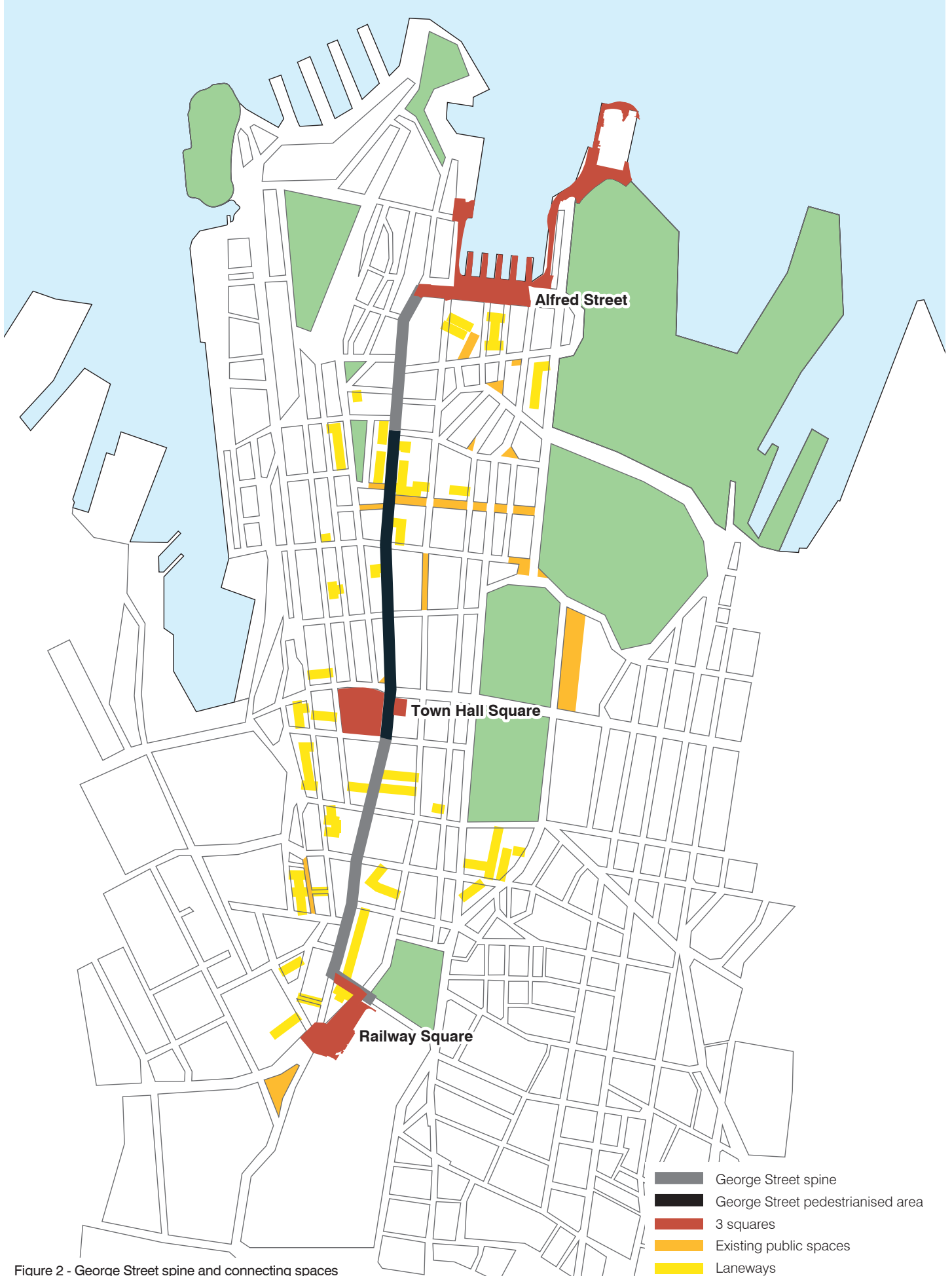


Figure 2 - George Street spine and connecting spaces

## 1.4 Related City strategies

This study supports the George Street Concept Design, which forms part of the overall City Centre Public Domain Plan. Using a precinct based approach, the Public Domain Plan delivers on Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategic Directions:

- 01 A Globally competitive and innovative City;**
- 04 A City for pedestrians and cyclists;**
- 05 A lively and engaging city centre;**
- 06 Vibrant local communities and economies;**
- 07 A cultural and creative city.**

Detailed public domain improvement proposals will be developed over time for each precinct within the City. To date the City has done studies for Chinatown, Harbour Village North and George Street.

The character and function of George Street will also be shaped by a range of City policies and strategies. These include the Economic Development Strategy and Retail Action Plan, Cultural Policy, Walking Strategy and Public Art Strategy.

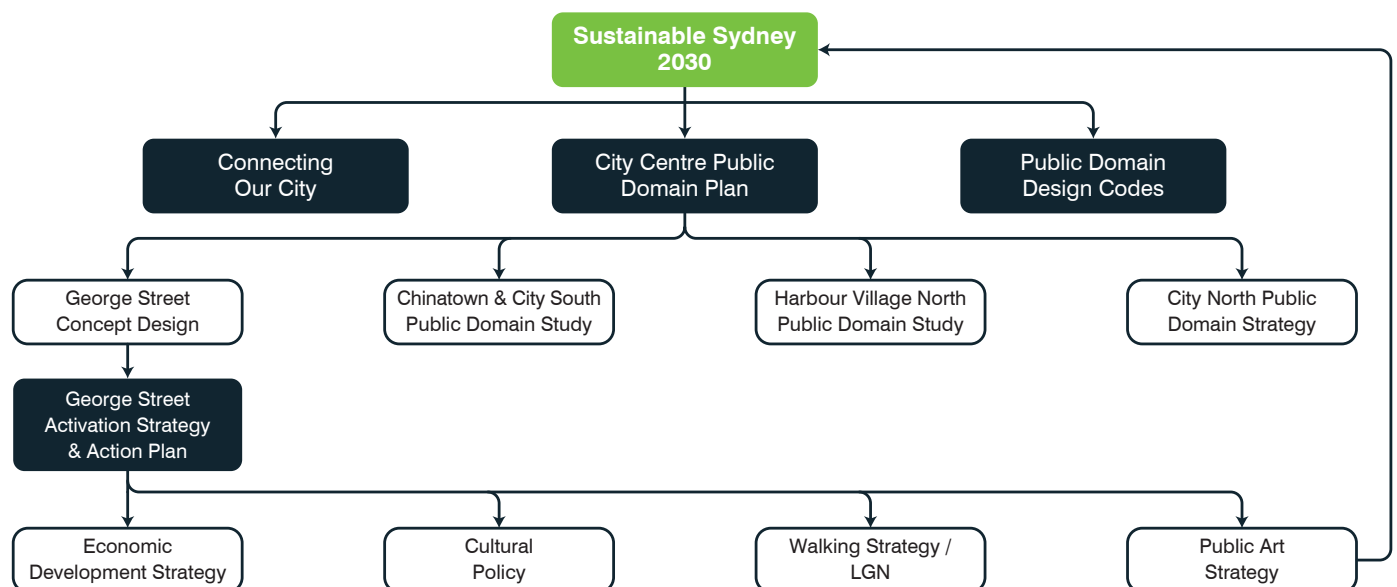
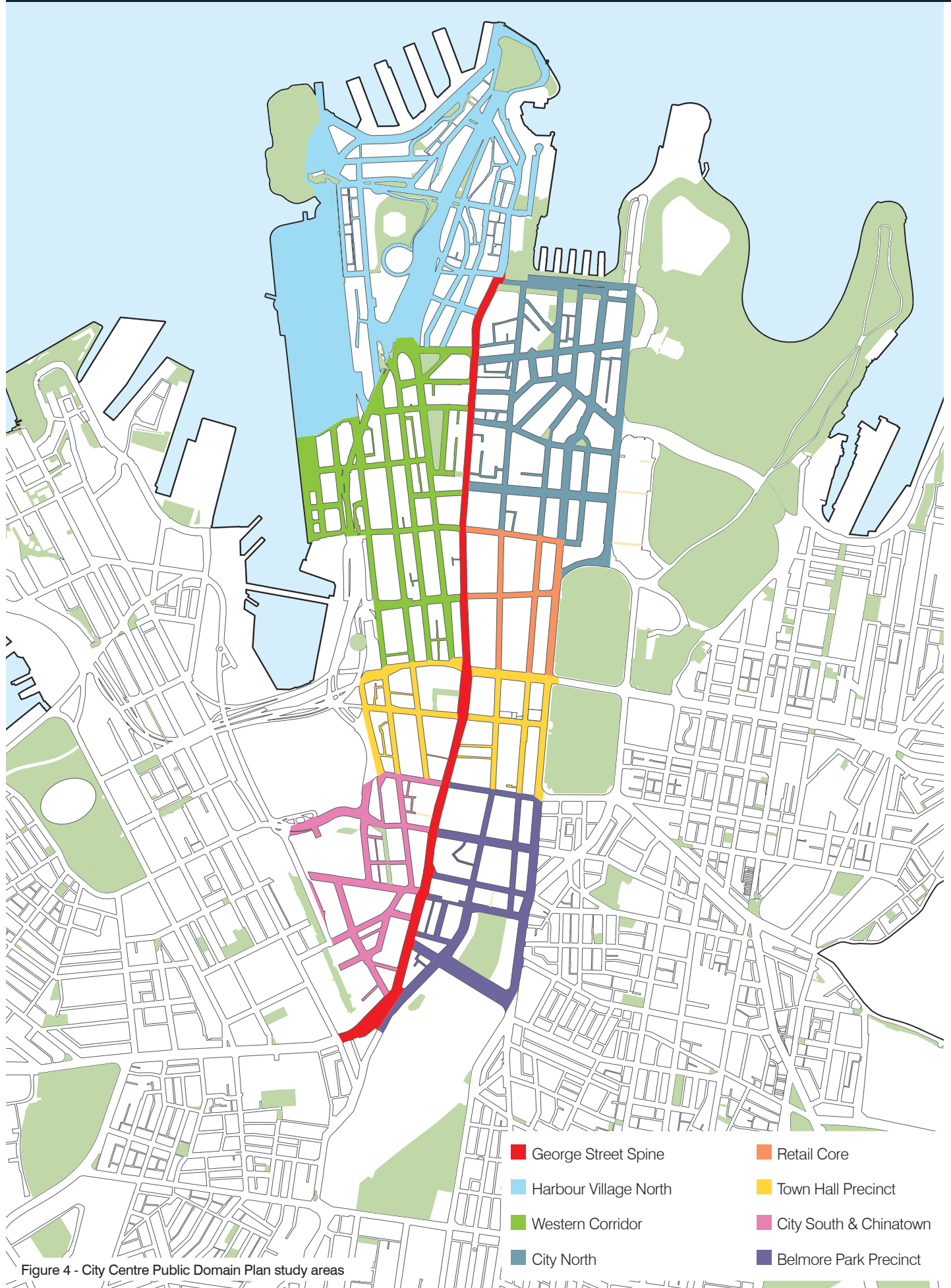


Figure 3 - Strategy Context





## 1.5 George Street past and present

George Street is one of Australia's oldest streets. Originally a track for Eora clans that later connected convict encampments at The Rocks to the brickpit near today's Central Station, the route evolved to become Sydney's original high street. The construction of Central Station in 1855, The GPO in the 1860s and Sydney Town Hall in the 1880s, cemented the civic importance of George Street. It was a centre for commerce and trade as well as connecting to the emerging financial area around today's Martin Place.

George Street has also evolved as an important transport route through central Sydney. In 1899 an electric tramway was opened along George Street to Harris Street. Trams were replaced by diesel buses in 1959.

Today George Street is dominated by vehicle traffic. Buses have the greatest visual and acoustic impact on the experience of the street. The result is a street which no longer functions efficiently for pedestrians or vehicles.

### George Street is characterised by:

- Low pedestrian priority;
- An overload of buses;
- Poor pedestrian amenity;
- Noise;
- Closed frontages and facades.

The poor performance of George Street for pedestrians has significant impacts for the retail vibrancy of the street. It also detracts from the walkability of Central Sydney as a whole.

### Number of pedestrians between 10am - 10pm on a summer weekday

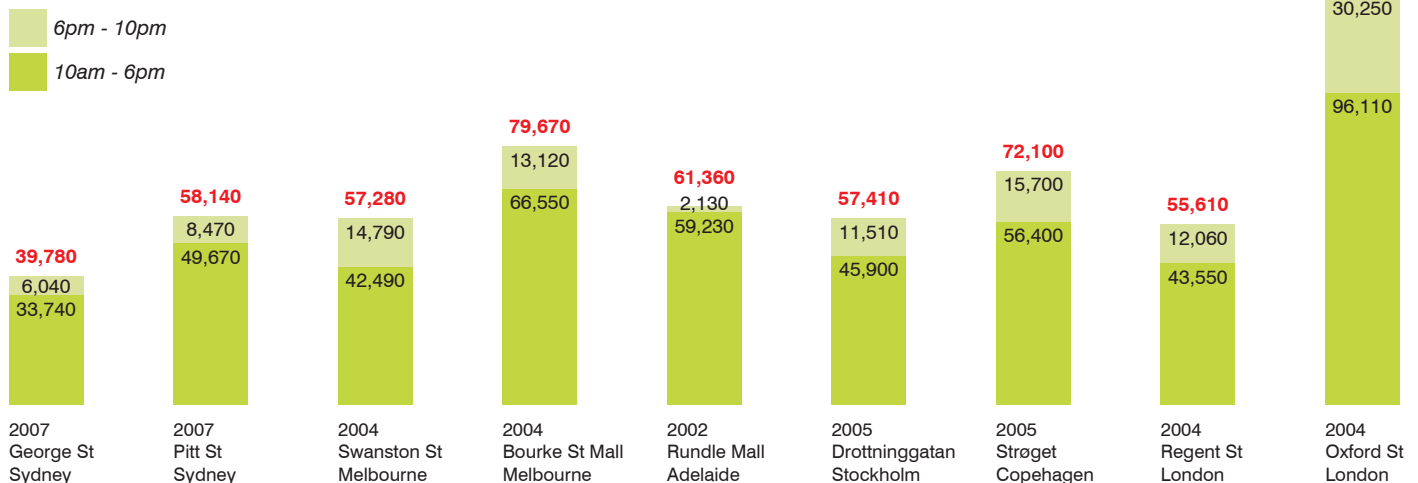


Figure 5 - Source: Public Spaces Public Life - City of Sydney 2007 (Gehl Architects)

# George Street 2020 - A Public Domain Activation Strategy



Figure 6 - George Street 1930



Figure 7 - George Street today



## Revitalising George Street



Figure 8

### Public Spaces/Public Life, 2007

In 2007 the City of Sydney commissioned Gehl Architects to create a blueprint to turn Sydney into a people-friendly, public transport-oriented and green city. The study provided Sydney a comprehensive set of ideas and recommendations to transform the city. The Public Spaces/Public Life study provided the genesis for the George Street light rail concept, informed the Strategic Directions of Sustainable Sydney 2030 and generated the Light Rail Concept Design.

This strategy is informed by the recommendations of Public Spaces/Public Life.

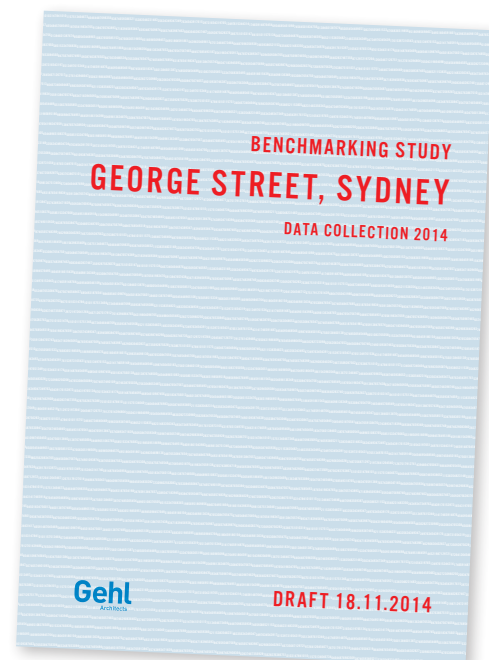
### George Street Benchmarking Study, 2014

The City has engaged Gehl Architects to undertake a benchmarking study of George Street. This will collate a range of data on George Street today to measure:

- Mobility;
- Public life;
- Experience;
- Identity;
- Economics; and
- Environmental impacts.

The City will use this data to measure the performance of George Street as it transforms to a pedestrian and light rail corridor. This will allow better comparisons to be drawn between George Street and other Sydney streets, as well as great streets in other cities and countries.

The benchmarking data will be useful in assessing the pedestrianised area of George Street. It will determine the degree to which we can further activate the street to encourage pedestrian movement.





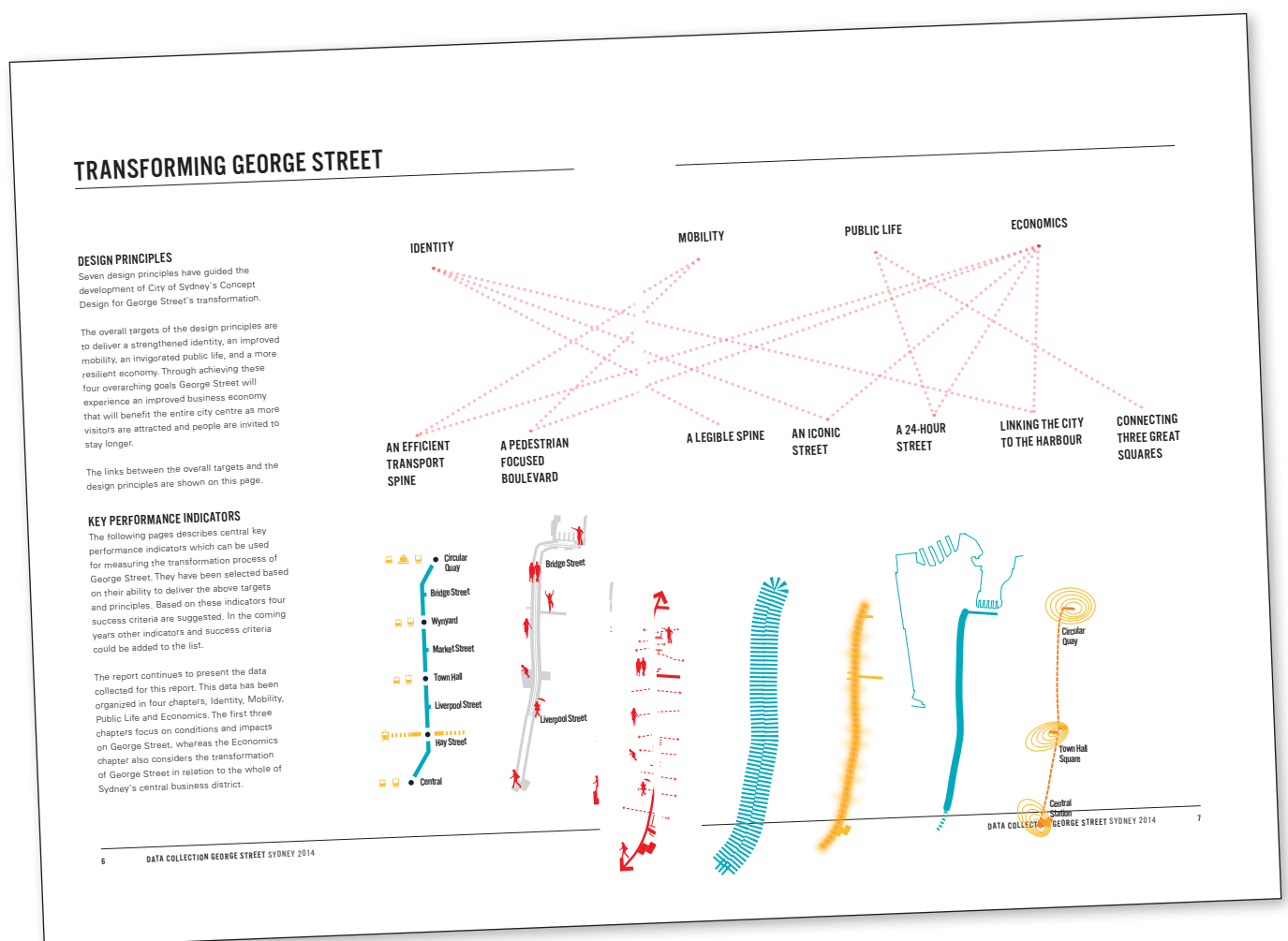


Figure 9 - Excerpt - George Street Benchmarking Study (Gehl Architects)





Figure 10 - Illustrative view - George Street Concept Design



# 02

## The George Street Public Domain

### 2.1 Activation principles

The City's vision for George Street is guided by the following principles:

- **Maximisation of space for pedestrians**
- **Minimisation of clutter in the streetscape**
- **A balance between public and private occupation of space**
- **A 24-hour street offering diversity of use beyond traditional business hours**
- **A dedicated flex-zone to contain all furnishings and free standing elements**
- **A co-ordinated suite of elements**
- **Universal accessibility**
- **High quality design and materiality**

The implications of these principles for the public domain and building edges of George Street will be developed in this strategy.



## 2.2 Organising principles

**George Street's organising principles, general layout and extent of pedestrianisation are set out in the George Street Concept Design (endorsed 2013). The organisation of the public domain is explained below.**

### Universal access

George Street will be the primary north-south corridor for pedestrian movement in Central Sydney. Safe and comfortable movement for all is an important part of a high-quality public domain.

The transformation of George Street, including pedestrianisation of about 1km of the street, is an unprecedented opportunity to improve universal access. A continuous shore line is an important tool for pedestrians with mobility impairments to find their way along the street and use the north-south spine of the city.

Providing a clear, uncluttered path of travel is a priority. To achieve this, a 3.6m minimum width pedestrian movement zone will be provided along the property boundary on each side of the street.

### Tram movement and infrastructure

The light rail has allowed for increased pedestrian space along George Street. In both pedestrianised and non-pedestrianised areas, a safe light rail corridor and adequate clear space for pedestrian movement are priorities. To accommodate tram movement and infrastructure these principles will be adopted.

- An approx. 6.75m wide corridor for light rail movement (referred to as the Light Rail Developed Kinematic Envelope or DKE) will be provided down the centre of the street.\*
- A tree zone will be provided along each side of the light rail DKE to contain street trees and smart poles. The centreline of trees is to be 0.9m from the DKE in the pedestrianised area.

### The flex-zone

The remaining space between the pedestrian movement zone and either the kerb (in non pedestrianised areas) or the tree zone (in pedestrianised areas) is referred to as the 'flex-zone'. It contains all the permanent and temporary public domain elements required along the length of the street.

Fixed furniture such as seating, bins and bubblers will be located in the flex-zone. Where the width of the street allows, the wider flex-zone can accommodate activity such as transient seating, outdoor dining or trading. The pedestrianised area of George Street presents the primary opportunity for utilising the flex-zone. Outside the pedestrianised area the width of the flex-zone is limited, or non-existent.

The flex-zone is indicated on the block-by-block plans in Part 5 of this document.

### Design recommendations

- Provide a minimum 3.6m clear corridor for pedestrian movement along the property boundary on each side of George Street.
- Provide an approximately 6.75m wide corridor for light rail, clear of any fixtures or intrusions (the light rail DKE).
- Provide a zone along each side of the light rail DKE to accommodate street tree planting and smart poles, as shown.
- The flex-zone occupies the remainder of the footpath area, and contains all fixed and temporary public domain elements.
- Where conditions have been satisfied and the remaining flex-zone has a useable width of at least 3m, activity such as transient seating, outdoor dining or trading can be considered.

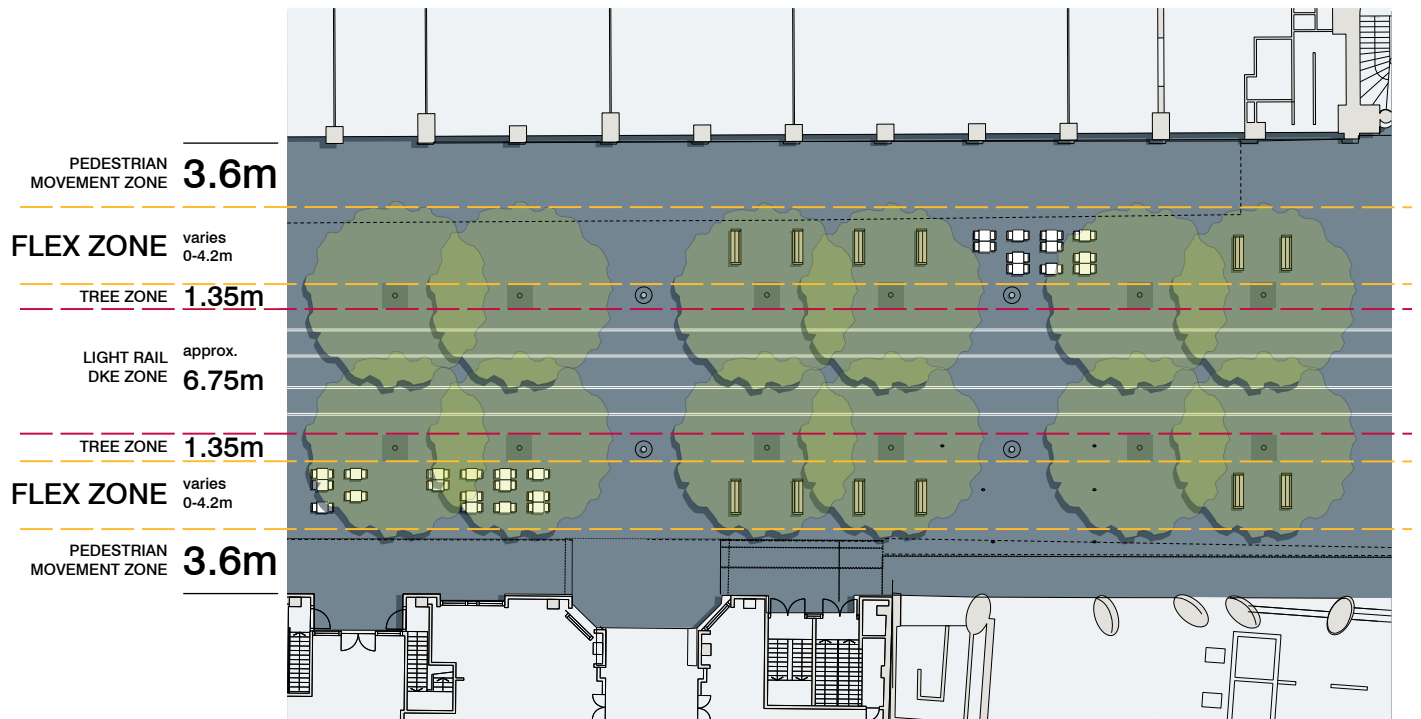


Figure 11 - Pedestrianised area - spatial requirement

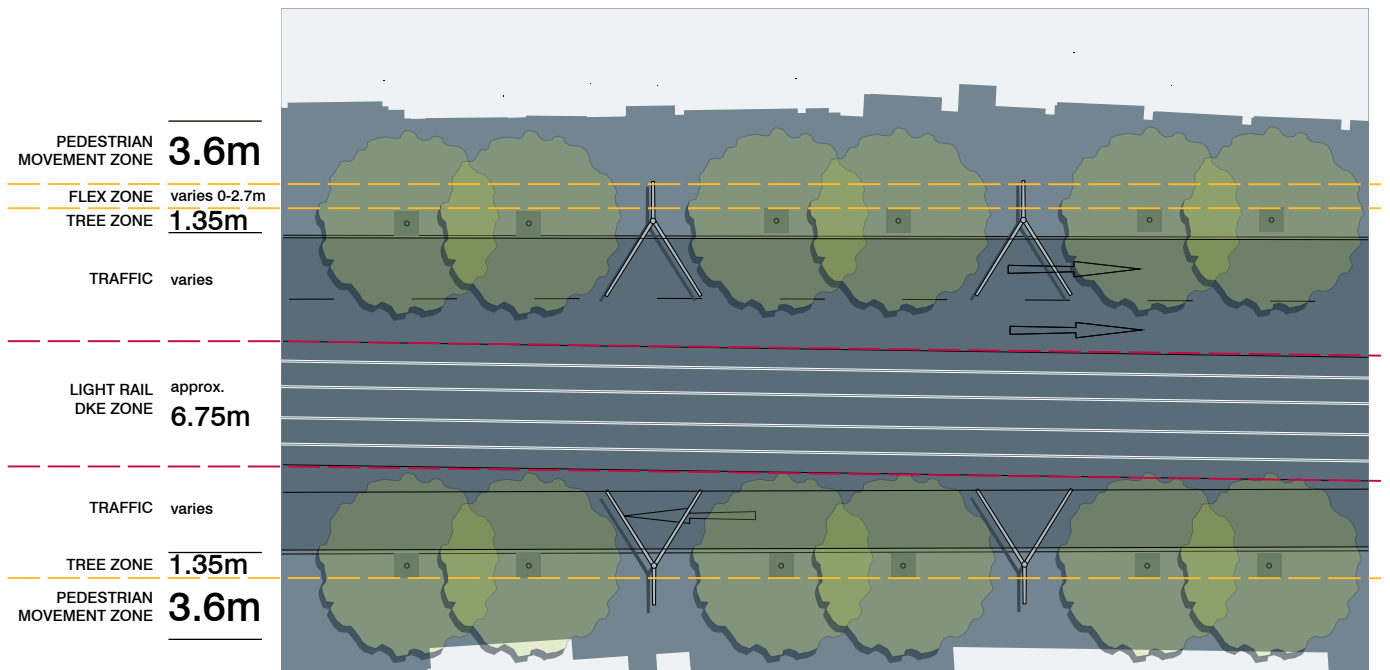


Figure 12 - Non-pedestrianised area - spatial requirements

## Flex-Zone Activation Ideas

- moveable seating
- outdoor trading
- food trucks
- pop-up gardens
- temporary art
- outdoor dining
- performances
- curated displays
- event information
- street music
- evening markets
- busking
- wi-fi hotspots
- and more>

