Riverside Theatres Redevelopment Project

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Assessment

Reference: CP-RP-0004

Final | 26 February 2025

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

Job number 296335-00

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of City of Parramatta Council (CoPC) to support a State Significant Development (SSD) Development Application (DA) for redevelopment of Riverside Theatres at 351-353 Church Street Parramatta.

The Riverside Theatres redevelopment project is Development for the purposes of an Entertainment Facility with an estimated development cost of more than $30 million. Such development is state significant development in accordance with Schedule 1, clause 13 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems)2021. The development is considered state significant as the proposed works are estimated to have a development cost exceeding $30 million.

1.1 Site Description

Riverside Theatres is situated upon the lands of the Dharug people. It is located within the City of Parramatta Council Local Government Area within Sydney's Central River City (refer to Figure 1).

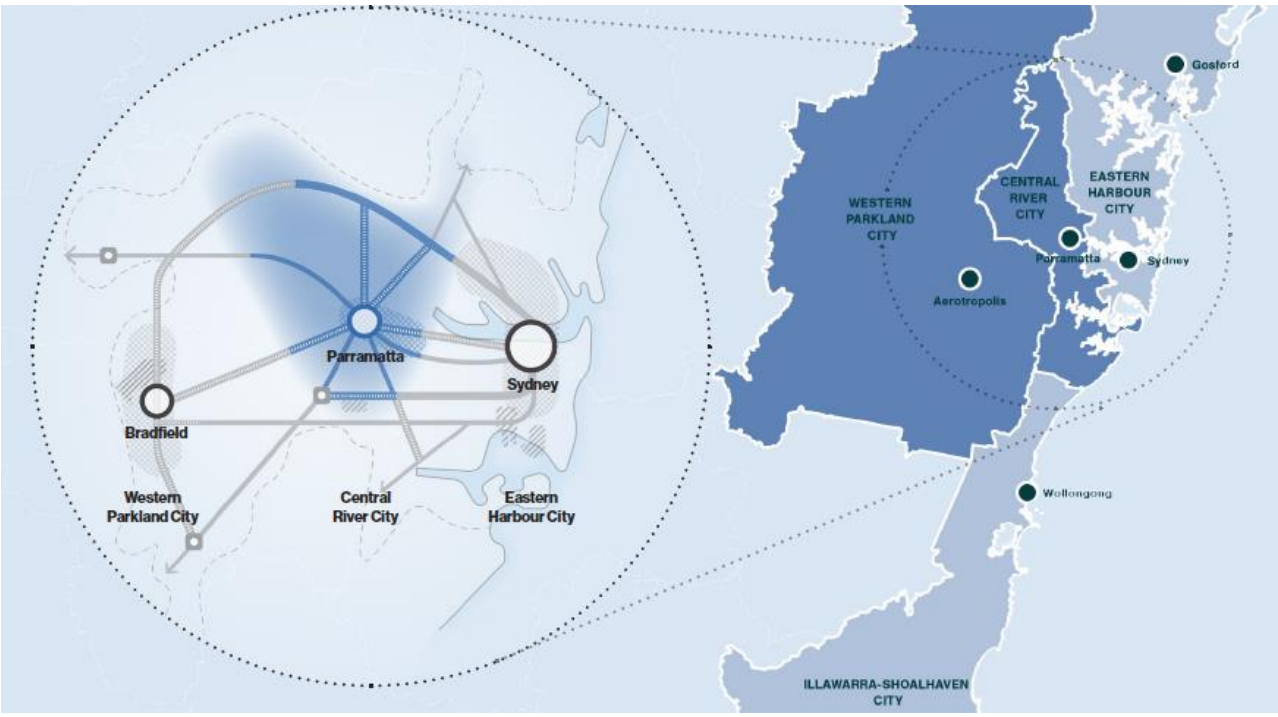

Figure 1: Context Plan for Parramatta

Located at 351-353 Church Street, Parramatta, the site comprises Lots 1 and 2 DP 740382. The site contains the existing Riverside Theatres, originally constructed in 1988 and modified since. The site also contains a small at-grade car park to the west adjacent to Marsden Street and accessed from Market Street.

The site is bordered by Church Street in the east, the Parramatta River in the south, Marsden Street to the west and Market Street to the north (refer to Figure 2).

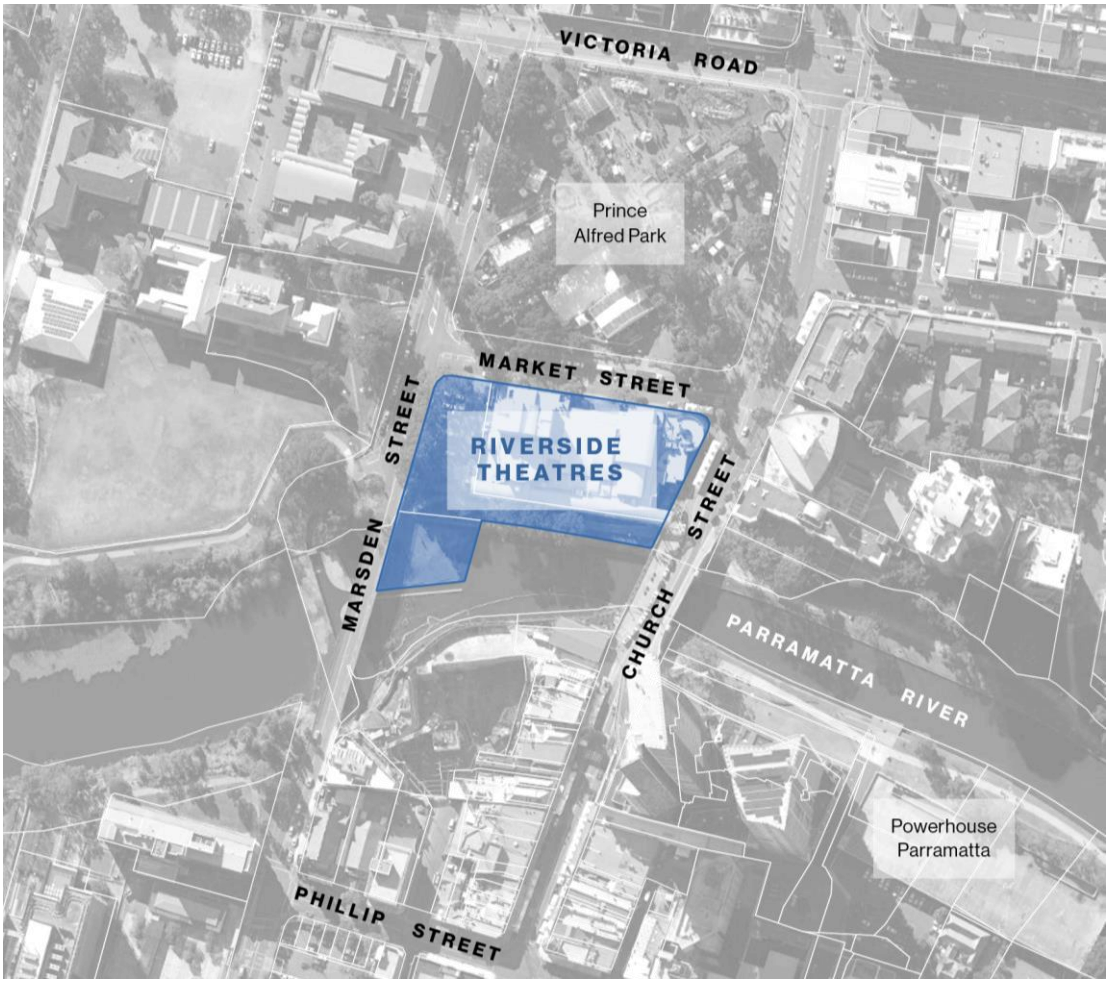

Figure 2: Riverside Theatres Redevelopment Site Boundary

1.2 Overview of Proposed Development

This SSD DA seeks consent for the design, construction and operation of the redeveloped Riverside Theatres. Specifically, approval is sought for the following:

- Site preparation works, including site services and infrastructure works, earthworks and the erection of site protection hoardings and fencing.
- Retention of the existing 761-seat Drama (Riverside) Theatre and demolition of all remaining buildings on the site.
- Construction of new front of house foyer spaces including:
  - New public entries facing Parramatta River and Church Street;
  - Food and beverage 'theatre' bars;
  - Arrival and gathering space;
  - Function spaces; and
  - Amenities.
- Construction of new theatre spaces including:
  - A 1,500 seat Lyric Theatre;
  - A 324 seat Studio Theatre with retractable seating; and
  - A 100 seat Cinema/Rehearsal space with dedicated entry from the public domain.

- Refurbishment of interiors to the 761 seat Drama (Riverside) Theatre.
- Construction of a new loading dock with access from Market Street.
- Construction of back of house spaces including:
  - Staff offices and amenities;
  - Central kitchen;
  - Dressing rooms;
  - Technical production spaces; and
  - Storage, cleaning and support spaces.
- Landscaping and public domain works including:
  - A new landscape between Riverside Theatres and the river foreshore;
  - An enhanced upper level pedestrian connection between Church and Marsden Streets;
  - An enhanced landscape treatment to the Marsden street interface;
  - A new lower level pedestrian and cycle connection connecting to existing paths east and west; and
  - A riverfront café integrated within the landscape terraces.

Full details of the proposed development are set out in the Architectural Drawings and Landscape and Public Domain Drawings accompanying the DA.

1.3 Assessment Requirements

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) has issued Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) to the applicant for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed development. This report has been prepared having regard to the SEARs as follows:

Environmental Assessment Requirement	Where addressed in this report
7. Public Space	
Address how Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles are to be integrated into the development, in accordance with Crime Prevention and the Assessment of Development Applications Guidelines.	Section 6

1.4 Purpose

Arup has been engaged to conduct a crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) assessment for the Riverside Theatres development. The purpose of the assessment is to identify design treatments which minimise the likelihood and consequence associated with potential crime and anti-social behaviour at the entertainment precinct.

2. Context

2.1 Local Context

Riverside Theatres is located on the Parramatta River, as well as at the intersection of two public transit routes; the Parramatta Light Rail line and Parramatta River Walk. Prince Alfred Square is directly north of the site and Bayanami Public School to the west. Further west, there is also CommBank Stadium.

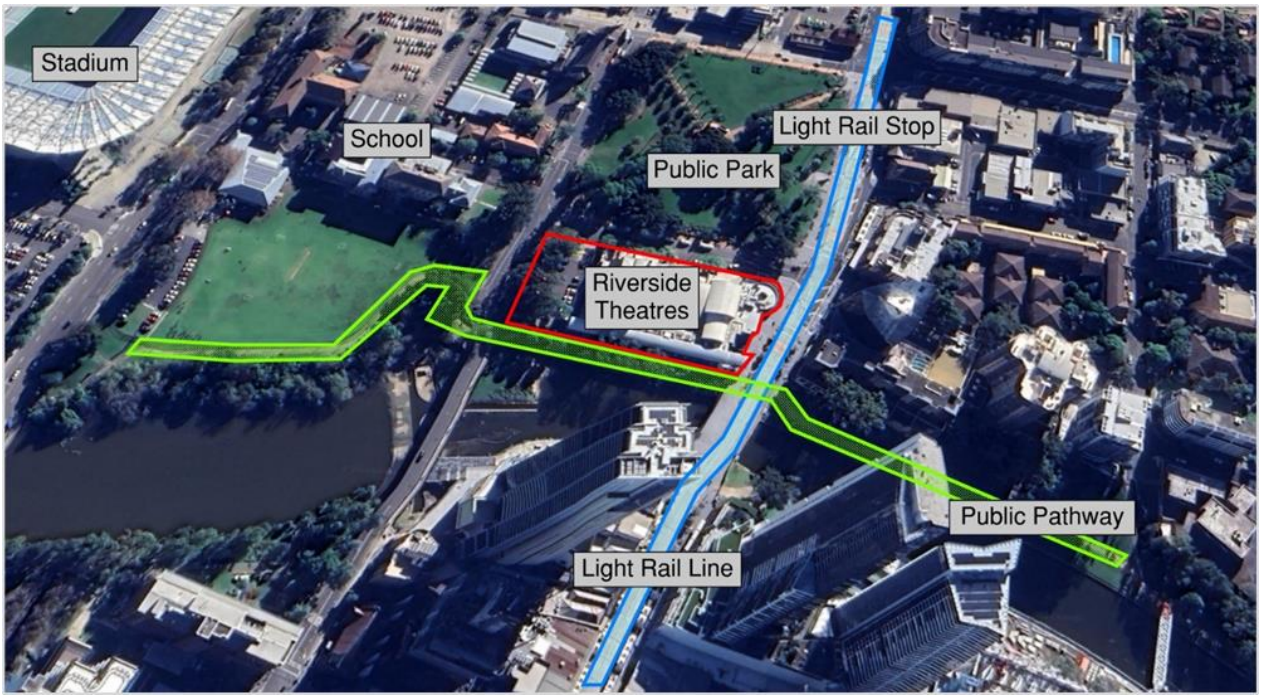

Figure 3: Riverside Theatres and surrounding sites

2.2 Site Context

The venue operates multiple theatre spaces and hosts musicals, formal theatre, music, comedies, family events, and ad-hoc special events. There is also an internal cinema space. Operations occur throughout the day and into the evening, roughly from 10am through to 11pm. However, some activities such as garbage collection occur in the early hours of the morning. Site access primarily occurs via the southern pedestrian entrance and parking is controlled operationally from Market Street. Staff can enter the site 24/7 with the appropriate authorisation, including via the loading dock.

3. Methodology

The CPTED assessment carried out in this report operates under the following methodology:

1. Examination of the site and its surrounds to determine likely impacts on crime;
2. Analysis of existing (reported) crime data to inform crime implications for the site; and
3. Assessment of the site according to the four CPTED principles outlined in the NSW Police Safer by Design methodology.

The four Safer by Design CPTED principles are defined as follows:

Surveillance refers to the ability of users of a space to see others in their environment. It also includes the ability of those tasked with monitoring a space to carry out this function. Surveillance can be broken down into three subcategories:

- *Natural surveillance* is achieved when normal space users can see and be seen by others.
- *Technical/mechanical surveillance* is achieved through mechanical/electronic measures such as CCTV, help points and mirrored building panels. It is commonly used as a 'patch' to supervise isolated, high-risk locations.
- *Formal (or Organised) surveillance* is achieved through the tactical positioning of guardians, such as on-site supervisors and security guards.

Access Control treatments restrict, channel and encourage movement into, out of, or through a site. Wayfinding, desire-lines and formal/informal routes are important crime prevention considerations. Access Control can be broken down into three subcategories:

- *Natural access control* includes the tactical use of landforms and waterways features, design measures including building configuration; formal and informal pathways, landscaping, fencing and gardens.
- *Technical/Mechanical access control* includes the employment of security hardware. Crime, Design and Urban Planning: From theory to Practice Formal (or Organised) access control includes on-site guardians such as employed security officers.
- *Formal (or Organised) access control* includes on-site guardians such as employed security officers.

Territorial Reinforcement uses actual and symbolic boundary markers, spatial legibility and environmental cues to 'connect' people with space, to encourage communal responsibility for public areas and facilities, and to communicate to people where they should/not be and what activities are appropriate.

Space/Activity Management strategies are an important way to develop and maintain natural community control. Space management involves the formal supervision, control and care of the development. All space, even well planned and well-designed areas need to be effectively used and maintained to maximise community safety. Places that are infrequently used are also commonly abused.

These principles guide the use of design and space management around the planning, design and structure of precincts and buildings to create an effective use of the built environment which can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime. CPTED is closely linked to situational crime prevention and is intended to deter opportunistic crimes.

4. Geography

4.1 Land Use Risk Assessment

Riverside Theatres is located in a mixed-use zone (MU1), which is designed to allow for a wide variety of land uses. Close to Riverside Theatres, this includes retail, hospitality, transport, education, religious, and business. The site is also located near public recreational zones (RE1). These zones are intended for a range of community activities, such as public parks and walking trails. Near to Riverside Theatres, this includes the Parramatta Riverwalk and Foreshore Reserve, as well as Prince Alfred Square – a large public park.

The way in which land is used can influence the likelihood of crime and anti-social behaviour. While the specific outcomes of a site are largely determined by environmental factors, certain land uses can encourage or discourage unwanted behaviours.

MU1 and RE1 are generally lower risk categories, and typically encourage legitimate engagement by providing spaces for legitimate users to shop, eat, travel, and undertake recreational activities. The zones are likely to generate positive activation throughout the space, as well as facilitate natural surveillance and community ownership from users. This increases the perceived and actual risk for potential offenders.

However, it should be noted that the risk profiles tend to shift after dark, as many businesses close, the public returns home, and surveillance becomes naturally more difficult. This may coincide with the theatre hosting evening events. The adjacent spaces are likely to be vacant after dark, such as the public park and primary school. As such, there may be less natural surveillance throughout the precinct, which can decrease perceptions of safety from users and lower the perceived/actual risk for potential offenders.

4.2 Immediate Locality Assessment

Arup has identified the following locations, which are within immediate vicinity to Riverside Theatres.

- Parramatta Light Rail is located directly adjacent to the site. Major construction of the light rail is complete. By 2026, it is estimated that around 22,000 people will use the light rail every day. This is likely to contribute to a transient population throughout the space, which may increase the likelihood of associated crime, such as crimes against property. However, it will also provide greater surveillance for more serious crimes, such as assault.
- Parramatta River Walk is located directly south of the site, and generates activation within the space from a range of use groups throughout the day and night. This is anticipated to provide additional surveillance for the site and promote its integration into the surrounding area.
- Prince Alfred Square is located directly north of the site. This is expected to generate positive activation within the area, as well as natural surveillance from users, throughout the day. The park is likely to draw a variety of user groups, including families and recreational users.
- Bayanami Public School is located west of the site. The school offers primary level education, recording 521 students in 2022. This is expected to have minimal influence on the space. However, families may walk past the theatre or use nearby adjacencies, such as the park prior to or after school hours.
- Commbank Stadium is located further west. The venue hosts a range of events, including sporting and entertainment and has capacity for up to 30,000 people.

4.3 Proximity to Emergency Services

Riverside Theatres is located in close proximity to emergency services. The nearest services are as follows.

- Parramatta Fire and Rescue (approximately 1.8 kilometres, ~5 minute drive).
- Westmead Hospital (approximately 3.1 kilometres away, ~8 minute drive).
- Parramatta Police Station (approximately 400 metres, ~2 minute drive).

4.4 Summary

The analysis of land uses and zones indicates a low risk profile. The RE1 zones were identified as lower risk categories, owing to the generation of positive activation throughout the space and facilitation of community ownership through surveillance from a range of user groups. However, it should be noted that the risk profile may change at night as a result of vacancy from nearby locations, such as the public park and primary school, which can decrease perceived/actual safety in the area. However, this is not anticipated to be worse than any other comparable site after dark.

The immediate locality of Riverside Theatres is likely to generate positive activation and natural surveillance throughout the space during daylight hours. This includes from Parramatta River Walk, Prince Alfred Square and Bayanami Public School. While some locations (such as Parramatta Light Rail) are likely to contribute to a transient population and influence the likelihood of some crime types, it is not anticipated to generate significant impacts to Riverside Theatres specifically and will also increase surveillance opportunities.

The potential for crime as identified within this assessment remains an ongoing risk for Riverside Theatres. However, the risk has been considered and mitigated to a reasonable degree through the site's design.

5. Crime Analysis

5.1 Suburb Data

Riverside Theatres is located in the suburb of Parramatta. The figure below summarises the reported number of incidents for each offence type listed. It is acknowledged that suburb crime statistics may not fully reflect the driving threats in a site-specific context. However, these statistics are used to capture a broad representation of the criminal threats in the local area with a focus on examining the primary threat types likely to occur at Riverside Theatres.

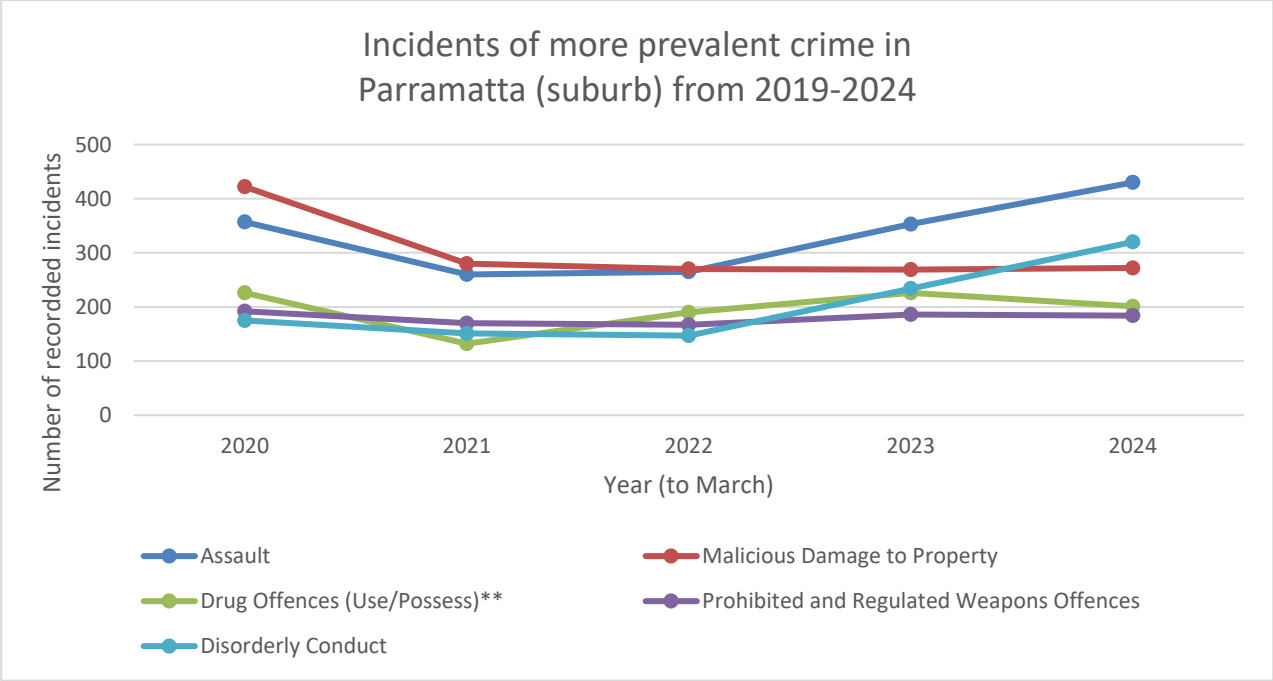

Figure 4: Incidents of More Prevalent Crime in Parramatta (2019-2024)

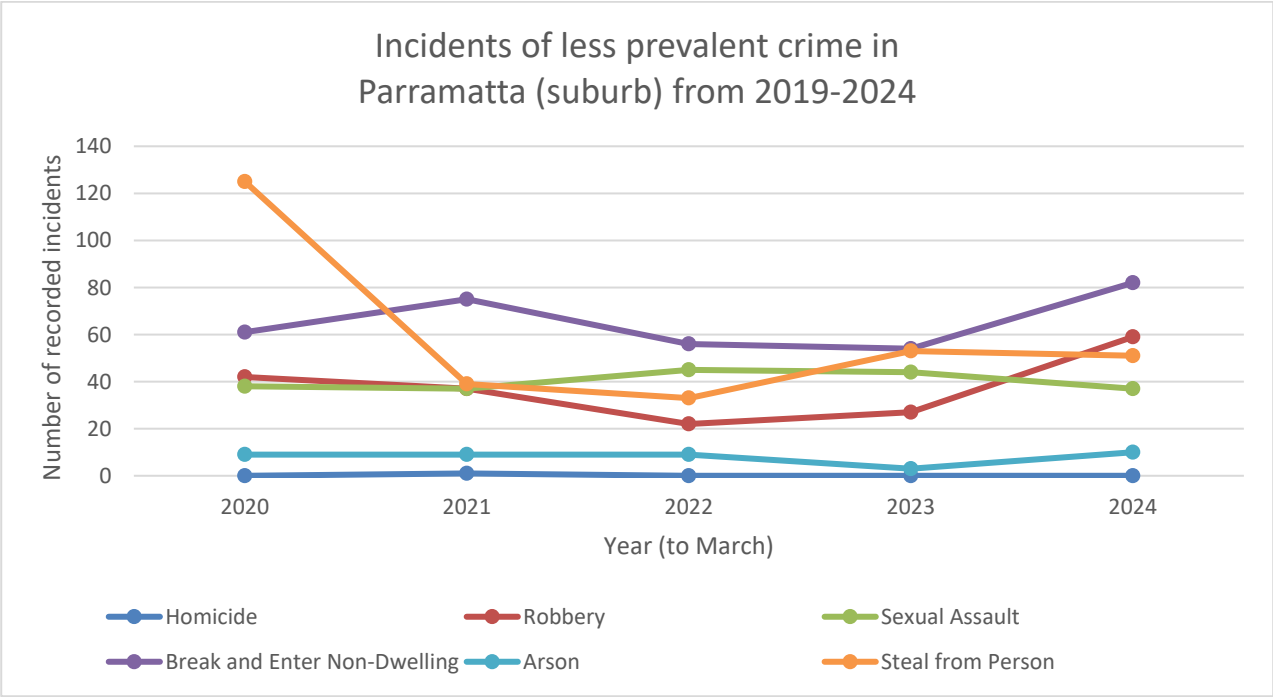

Figure 5: Incidents of Less Prevalent Crime in Parramatta (2019-2024)

Figure 4 and Figure 5 highlight the following details:

- Non-Domestic Assault, Drug Offences, Disorderly Conduct, Malicious Damage to Property, and Prohibited and Regulated (P&R) Weapons Offences are the most prevalent recorded crime types in the suburb.
- Only one homicide was recorded in the last 5 years.
- Between 2021 to 2022, Sexual Assault rose by ~25% but has returned to the 2021 level in 2024. In the same period, Robbery fell by almost half, but in the year to March 2024 it has increased to ~50% higher than the recorded number for 2020 and 2021.
- Steal from Person is down dramatically from 2020, but up ~50% since 2022. Disorderly conduct has more than doubled since 2022.
- The most recent recording of incidents of Break and Enter Non-Dwelling, Robbery, and Non-Domestic Assault are the highest recorded levels in the last 5 years.

5.2 Comparison to NSW

Figure 6 identifies the rates for the above identified crimes in Parramatta (suburb), Parramatta (LGA), and the NSW average.

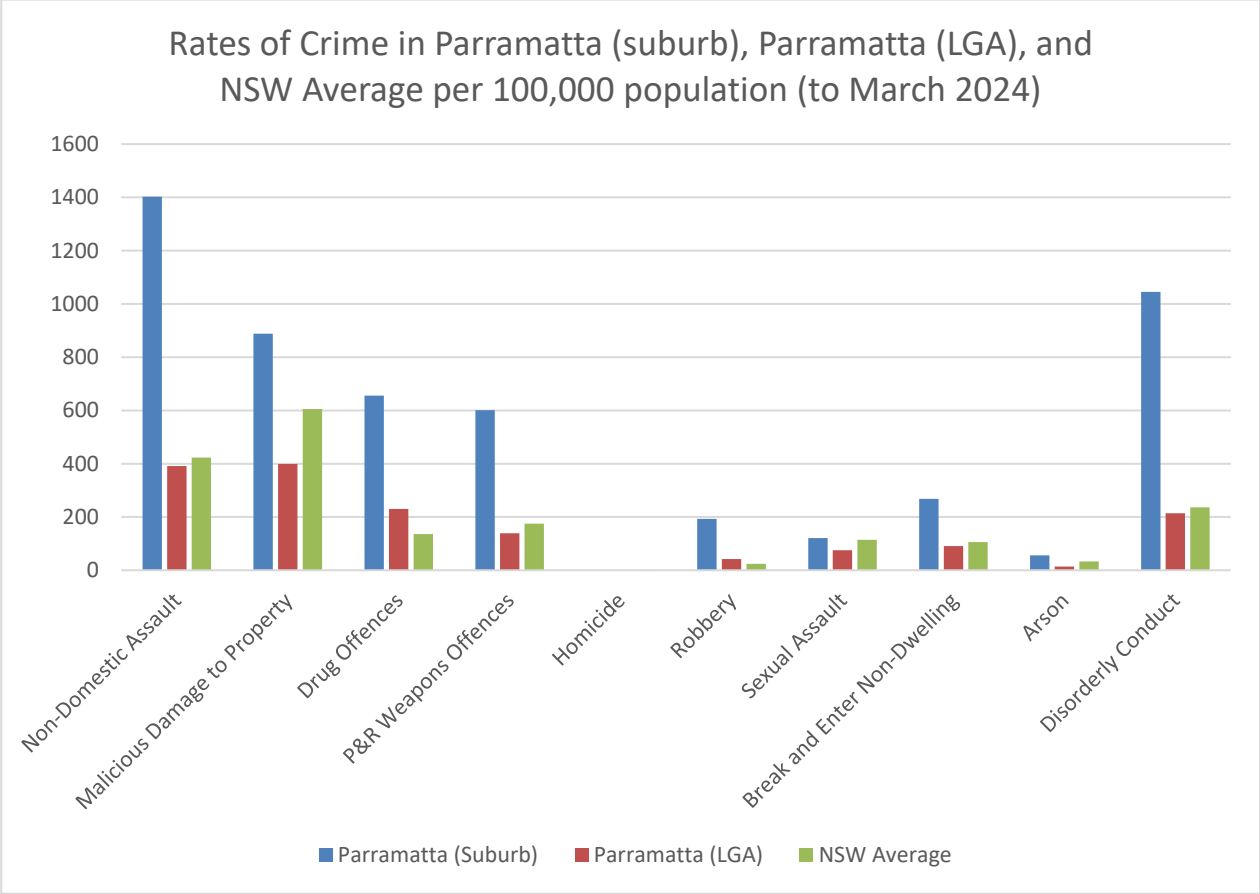

Figure 6: Rates of Crime in Parramatta (Suburb), Parramatta (LGA) and NSW Average Per 100,000 Population

5.3 Summary of Implications

The information presented in Section 5 indicates the following:

- The rates of crime in the Parramatta LGA are below the NSW average in many categories, however the crime rates for the Parramatta suburb are elevated by comparison. This indicates that crime within the LGA is concentrated within Parramatta suburb (i.e. around Riverside Theatres) rather than other suburbs in the LGA.

- Recorded numbers of incidents indicate that Non-Domestic Assault, Drug Offences, Malicious Damage to Property, and P&R Weapons Offences are the most frequently occurring crimes.
  - Of these offences, Non-Domestic Assault and P&R Weapons Offences are over 3x the NSW Average, and Drug Offences (Use/Possess) for cocaine, narcotics, amphetamines, and ecstasy are almost 5x the NSW Average, led by amphetamines as mentioned. Disorderly conduct is also over 4x the NSW Average. These are the primary crime categories for consideration.
- It should also be noted that, while smaller in number of occurrences, Robbery in Parramatta (suburb) is over 8x the NSW Average.
- The overall crime snapshot of Parramatta (suburb) and Riverside Theatres' immediate surrounds indicates that the risk to the safety of users should be a key consideration in the design. This understanding will be utilised in the following sections, which focus on detailed risk assessment and mitigation recommendations.

6. CPTED Integration into the Development

Arup has completed a CPTED assessment for Riverside Theatres. The purpose of the assessment is to identify aspects where the design has incorporated CPTED principles within the development to minimise the likelihood and consequence associated with crime and anti-social behaviour. This has been completed in accordance with the NSW CPTED guidelines.

6.1 Surveillance

Natural Surveillance

- The theatre is situated in a mixed-used zone with surrounding by public recreational zoning. As such, there are multiple positive activations located throughout the space, including a public park, primary school and walking trail. These are expected generate natural surveillance within the area.
- The design plans show landscaping and vegetation along the extent of the site boundary, including groundcover and trees. These have been selected and located to ensure clear lines of sight and facilitate natural surveillance throughout the space.

Formal Surveillance

- The theatre includes existing external and internal CCTV surveillance, for visual deterrence, monitoring, and evidentiary purposes. This will also be supported by new CCTV systems as the project is completed.
- The CCTV surveillance system is connected to the Parramatta Council CitySafe program for monitoring and response.
- Staff will be present and may also undertake additional security activities during certain screenings or events. This generates formal surveillance and may deter perpetrators in engaging in crime or anti-social behaviour.

6.2 Access Control

Natural Access Control

- The design plans show multiple points of entry and exit along both Market Street and Church Street. This mitigates the potential risk of entrapment for users when arriving and leaving the venue.
- The design has incorporated urban elements to facilitate the flow of pedestrians. This includes landscaping and vegetation and paving treatments. These elements provide a clear separation between pedestrians and vehicles.
- The design has considered vehicle access to the site. This includes along Church Street, where Parramatta Light Rail is located. The road design and location of the light rail naturally disallows vehicle from accessing the external plaza area of the theatre.

Formal Access Control

- The design has incorporated HVM measures along the extent of the site boundary to prevent unauthorised vehicle access.
- The design has incorporated access control between public and staff restricted spaces, as well as at the boundary to enter the building.
- The loading dock and garbage area will also be access controlled to only allow authorised parties.
- Staff will provide an operational overlay to support access control during screenings/events.

6.3 Territorial Reinforcement

- The design has incorporated seating furniture outside the theatre, which encourages people to linger prior to and after events. This type of activity is likely to reinforce ownership and legitimate use of the space.
- The design utilises varying materials and design elements to differentiate between public and private spaces, reinforcing a sense of ownership for Riverside Theatres.
- Signage is provided in the space to assist with wayfinding and legibility, as well as provide a sense of ownership in the space.
- An HVM perimeter will be provided to ensure that vehicles do not encroach on the site boundary or public realm around the theatres.

6.4 Space/Activity Management

- The theatre may be vulnerable to crimes against property, such as vandalism and graffiti. Therefore, vandal resistant materials have been utilised within the public realm. This includes on seating furniture located outside the theatre. Where vandalism and graffiti occur, this should be repaired and cleaned quickly.
- The theatre will operate throughout the day and evening, with typical hours of operation for events from 10am through to 12am. Garbage collection is scheduled in the early hours of the morning. This will facilitate natural surveillance and territorial reinforcement during these hours. In addition, garbage collection will ensure the space appears well cared for.
- An operational overlay will be provided by personnel at the theatres to enhance security and provide a response to any criminal activity.
- Maintenance will be provided by theatre personnel (e.g. removal of rubbish, repair of damaged material).
- Materials are selected to minimise the impact of wear and tear or vandalism. This reduces the impact of criminal activity and minimises the likelihood that the site will be seen as an ‘easy target’ for graffiti, vandalism, and other crimes.

7. Conclusion

It is not anticipated that Riverside Theatres will be negatively impacted by crime to a disproportionate degree. Crime within the suburb of Parramatta itself remains elevated compared to the broader LGA and State average, however site-specific factors including its zoning/surrounds, activation profile, hours of use, and layout are expected to minimise the impact of crime. While the profile of the site is being raised, its overarching use case will remain the same, and the security measures implemented in the design are expected to manage the negative impacts of this change.