



STAGE ONE - PLACE PLAN PARRAMATTA PRECINCT

**PERTH HOUSE, THE STABLES, GEORGE STREET AND
BARRACK LANE HERITAGE AND ACTIVATION FRAMEWORK**

FREECITY | PARRAMATTA

OCTOBER 2025

BY PEOPLE PLACE AND PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This Stage 1 Place Plan sets the foundation for understanding and activating the heritage core of the FREECITY Parramatta precinct. It focuses on the early stages of Perth House, The Stables, the Warders Cottages, the heritage fig tree and Barrack Lane, a collection of sites that together tell the story of Parramatta's early settlement and working life.

The purpose of this plan is to guide how these places are uncovered, interpreted and brought to life through design, storytelling and temporary activation. It begins the process of reconnecting the community with the site's historical layers, ensuring that conservation and creativity move forward together.

This plan has been prepared collaboratively by FREECITY and People Place and Partnership to align with local priorities for heritage conservation, cultural programming, and city-centre activation.

Above all, it is a Place Plan to ensure that this part of George Street and Barrack Lane becomes a place where people want to dwell, connect, and belong.



1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE



1.1 WHY A PLACE PLAN

A Place Plan is both a vision and a guide. It brings together the physical, social and cultural layers that shape how a place is experienced, cared for and shared.

For the FREECITY Parramatta Stage 1 precinct, the Place Plan focuses on the early stages of shaping Perth House, The Stables, the Warders Cottages and Barrack Lane.

It sets out how these heritage landmarks and their surrounding gardens can be understood, protected and brought back to life through storytelling, interpretation and public use.

This early Stage 1 work aims to uncover the stories within the site and build a foundation for how they can inform future activation and management. It ensures that the understanding of heritage comes first and that every next step reflects those findings.

1.2 A PRIVATELY LED APPROACH

While many place plans are prepared by government, this plan reflects a private commitment to lead with place and heritage. FREECITY has initiated this process early to ensure that the heritage character of the precinct is recognised and celebrated from the beginning.

By preparing this Stage 1 Place Plan, FREECITY is aiming to demonstrate that a development process can start with listening and learning. The intent is to reveal the stories of the site, understand its historical layers and create a shared framework for its care and activation. This approach ensures that the value of the project begins with heritage and contributes to the broader understanding of Parramatta's story.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

This Stage 1 Place Plan is grounded in three principles of practice: evidence, engagement, and action.

Evidence

analysis of heritage, city context, economic role, demographics, and future trends.

Engagement

insights from market research interviews, technical workshops, and FREECITY's own market research.

Action

a structure that organises strategies into clear steps to shape, activate, and coordinate the precinct.

The plan moves from context to vision, then to principles and early actions. This ensures that the precinct is first understood through its stories and historical layers, then supported with actions that are practical, measurable and respectful of heritage

This Stage 1 Place Plan is a living document. It will continue to evolve as the detailed planning and design processes progress for the State Significant Development Application (SSDA) at 1 Barrack Lane and 81–83 George Street, and through the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) process for 87–91 George Street. The intent is for heritage interpretation and place activation to remain central throughout these next stages, ensuring continuity between planning, design and implementation.

PARRAMATTA CITY CONTEXT

Parramatta stands at the intersection of history and modern city making. The precinct sits between Parramatta Square and Riverside Theatres and within walking distance of the Powerhouse Museum, Eat Street and Parramatta Park.

These anchors form a vibrant cultural corridor where heritage and contemporary life meet. Perth House from the 1840s is one of Parramatta's finest Georgian villas. Together with The Stables, the Warders Cottages, the convict drain and the mature fig tree, it tells the story of early settlement and working life.

This group of heritage assets provides a rare opportunity to interpret the city's evolution within a single walkable setting. The site's position on George Street and Barrack Lane ensures visibility and accessibility with steady movement from students, workers and visitors.

Stage 1 establishes the area as a welcoming place for people to explore, learn from and connect with Parramatta's heritage.



2.1 ROLE IN GREATER SYDNEY

Parramatta is positioned as Sydney's second CBD, complementing the Eastern Harbour City and connecting to the Western Parkland City. It sits at the geographic and demographic heart of Greater Sydney, with two million people living within 45 minutes. This centrality makes it both a service hub and a cultural anchor for Western Sydney.

2.2 INVESTMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

The level of public and private investment in Parramatta is unprecedented. More than \$30 billion is committed across infrastructure, education, health, and culture.

Major projects include:

- 1 **Parramatta Square**
\$3.2 billion civic and commercial precinct.
- 2 **Parramatta Light Rail**
Stage 1 due to open in 2024, connecting Westmead, the CBD, and Carlingford.
- 3 **Parramatta Metro**
Opening in 2026, linking Parramatta to Sydney CBD in 20 minutes.
- 4 **Powerhouse Parramatta**
Australia's largest museum project, currently under construction.
- 5 **Riverside Theatres redevelopment**
expanding cultural capacity for more than 300,000 annual visitors.

These projects demonstrate the scale of transformation underway and highlight the role of Parramatta as a national city-shaping centre.



INVESTMENT & TRANSFORMATION MAP

PLACE UNDERSTANDING

The FREECITY George Street precinct is more than a development site. It is a convergence of stories that span centuries, layered within one of the most dynamic and fastest growing city centres in Australia. To understand its potential, the Place Plan must consider the way history, culture, and urban life intersect on this small but significant footprint of George Street and Barrack Lane.

The precinct is anchored in heritage. Perth House, The Stables and the neighbouring Warders Cottages are physical reminders of Parramatta's early European settlement, while the mature fig tree and archaeological features connect to the daily lives and labour that shaped the city. These elements anchor the precinct in the past and provide a distinct identity that few new city centre projects can further explore.

At the same time, the precinct is positioned within a rapidly transforming CBD. Parramatta Square, Riverside Theatres, Eat Street, and the future Powerhouse Museum are all within a short walk. The constant flow of students, office workers, residents, and visitors creates both energy and expectation. People are looking for places that are authentic, convenient, welcoming and they will choose to dwell in the spaces that deliver on these qualities.

Understanding place therefore requires looking at multiple scales. It is about heritage buildings and garden rooms at the intimate scale, and about cultural anchors and transport investments at the city scale. It is about the people who already live and work in the area, and the tens of thousands who will join them in the future.



The Stables, Heritage Fig Tree and Perth House

THIS SECTION SETS OUT THE LAYERS OF HERITAGE, SETTING, ATTRACTIONS, AND PEOPLE THAT FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR FREECITY'S VISION FOR THE PRECINCT.

3.1 HERITAGE AND HISTORY

Heritage is the anchor of this precinct. Perth House, built in the 1840s, is one of Parramatta's finest Georgian villas and remains a rare example of a freestanding home from this period. The Stables, located adjacent, tell the story of the working life of the city, and the convict drain and the Warders Cottages reveal the deeper fabric of early colonial life. Together, they provide a tangible connection to Parramatta's layered history.

The heritage fig tree offers a living landmark that frames the site and gives identity to the precinct. These assets are not passive relics. They are intended to be actively used and celebrated, whether through adaptive reuse for cultural activity, interpretation through art and signage, or activation through events and programs.

3.2 CITY CENTRE SETTING

The precinct occupies a prominent position on George Street, within the CBD Core of Parramatta. It sits between Parramatta Square to the east and the Riverside Theatres precinct to the west, placing it at the edge of two of the city's strongest cultural and civic anchors. Barrack Lane, which runs alongside the site, has the potential to be reimaged as an intimate laneway spine that complements the busier George Street edge.

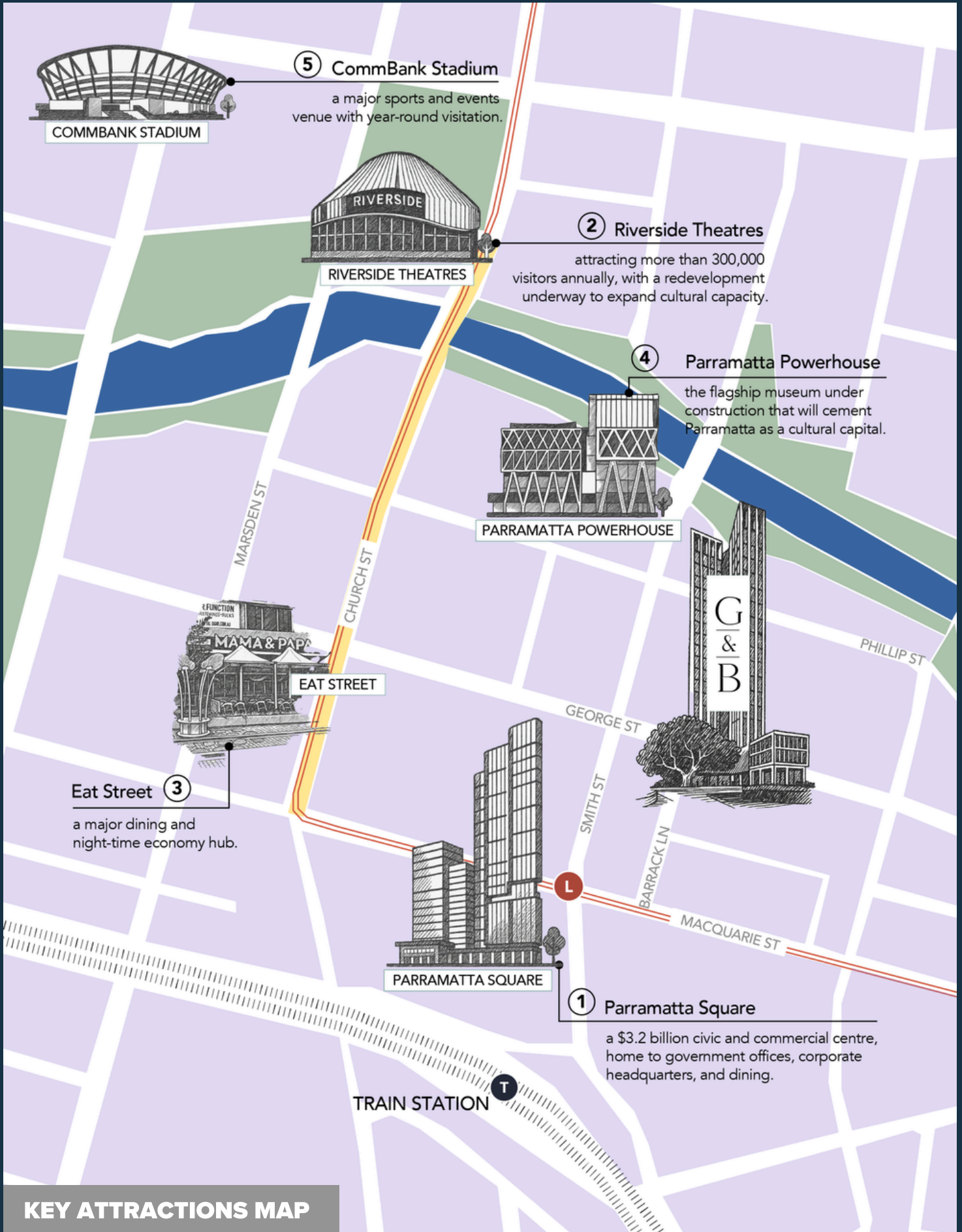
The surrounding context is one of high pedestrian movement, with students, office workers, theatre-goers, and residents moving through the area at all hours. The precinct has the advantage of being both central and distinct, positioned to become a recognisable and memorable destination within the broader city centre.

3.3 KEY ATTRACTIONS

The strength of the precinct lies in its proximity to some of Parramatta's most important cultural and civic destinations.

- 1** **Parramatta Square**
a \$3.2 billion civic and commercial centre, home to government offices, corporate headquarters, and dining.
- 2** **Riverside Theatres**
attracting more than 300,000 visitors annually, with a redevelopment underway to expand cultural capacity.
- 3** **Eat Street (Church Street)**
a major dining and night-time economy hub.
- 4** **Powerhouse Parramatta**
the flagship museum under construction that will cement Parramatta as a cultural capital.
- 5** **CommBank Stadium**
a major sports and events venue with year-round visitation.
- 6** **Parramatta Park and River precinct**
a World Heritage landscape and one of Sydney's most significant public open spaces.

The FREECITY George St precinct is well placed to act as a connector between these larger attractions, offering smaller-scale, human-centred spaces for pause, gathering, and discovery.



KEY ATTRACTIONS MAP

3.4 PEOPLE OF PARRAMATTA (NOW AND FUTURE)

The strength of Parramatta lies in its people. Today it is one of the most diverse and youthful cities in Australia, home to more than 260,000 residents, with over half speaking a language other than English at home. Its population represents more than 150 nationalities, making Parramatta one of the most multicultural communities in the country.

Parramatta’s workforce of more than 70,000 people brings daily energy to the city centre, supported by its education, health, government and creative industries. Cultural events such as Parramatta Laneway, Parramasala, Lunar New Year and Diwali celebrate this diversity and reinforce the city’s cultural vibrancy.

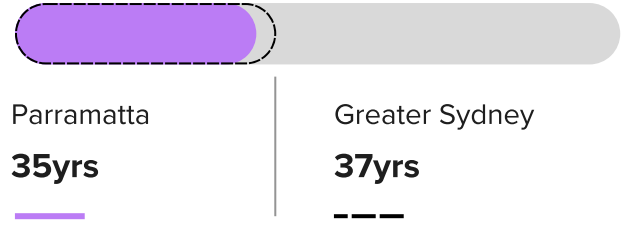
The Dharug people remain the Traditional Custodians of the land, and their stories and knowledge continue to shape the city’s evolving identity.

By 2041, Parramatta’s population is expected to exceed 450,000 residents, with growth in students, professionals and families. This growth will continue to support a thriving local economy, an active day and night-time population, and a culturally rich city centre that reflects the diversity and aspirations of its people.



DEMOGRAPHICS

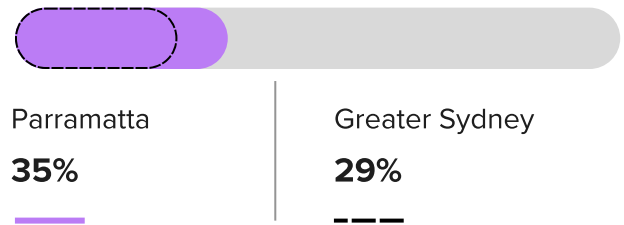
YOUTHFUL MEDIAN AGE *Average Age



Parramatta’s younger population drives innovation and cultural vibrancy.

PROFESSIONALES

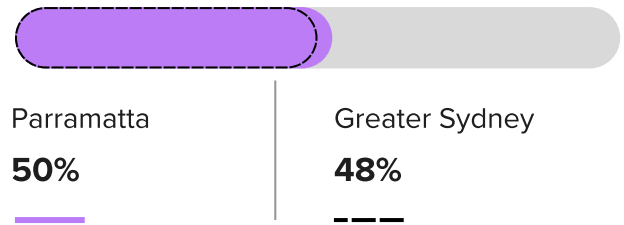
*Educated population working in tech, health and finance industries



A growing hub for skilled workers.

SMALL FAMILIES

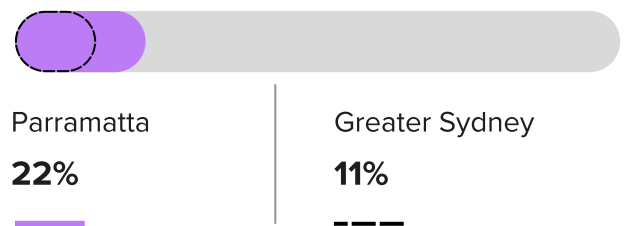
*1.7 Children Per Family



Compact households reflect an urban, connected lifestyle.

CHINESE ANCESTRY

*Diverse, multicultural backgrounds



Multicultural mix continues to shape Parramatta’s dynamic identity.

STAGE 1 - PLACE VISION



A vision defines the long term identity of a precinct. It is not only about what will be built but about the experience people will have when they live, work, and gather here. The vision for the FREECITY George St precinct must honour its deep history, respond to the needs of today, and anticipate the city of tomorrow. It must be bold enough to inspire and practical enough to guide action.

5.1 VISION STATEMENT

A living heritage precinct where history anchors creativity and community.

Perth House, The Stables and Barrack Lane together will form a connected cultural place that celebrates Parramatta’s past while welcoming its diverse present.

This vision speaks to three ambitions:

Living Heritage
Heritage assets are not left as static relics but adapted, celebrated, and activated.

History inspires discovery
The site’s layers of history guide how each space is understood and designed. Interpretation, archaeology and storytelling connect people with the daily lives, traditions and working heritage that shaped Parramatta.

Connect, Learn and Belong
The precinct is a place for people to gather, reflect and learn from the city’s past.

5.2 PLACE VALUES AND DRIVERS

The vision is supported by values that will guide decisions across design, activation and management. These values reflect the character of Parramatta and the heritage intent that underpins the early stage of this Place Plan.

- 1**

Authenticity
The precinct will be grounded in what is real. Perth House, The Stables, and the heritage fig tree will be visible, celebrated, and central to the experience of the place.
- 2**

Belonging
This will be a place where people from different backgrounds and life stages feel welcome. Inclusivity, safety, and cultural diversity will underpin every action, from heritage interpretation to event programming.
- 3**

Care for Place
Heritage conservation, sustainable design, and quality public realm will ensure that the precinct is well cared for and respected. Investment in greenery, comfort, and storytelling will create pride and attachment.

Together, these values will guide how the heritage assets are conserved, adapted and activated as planning and design progress.

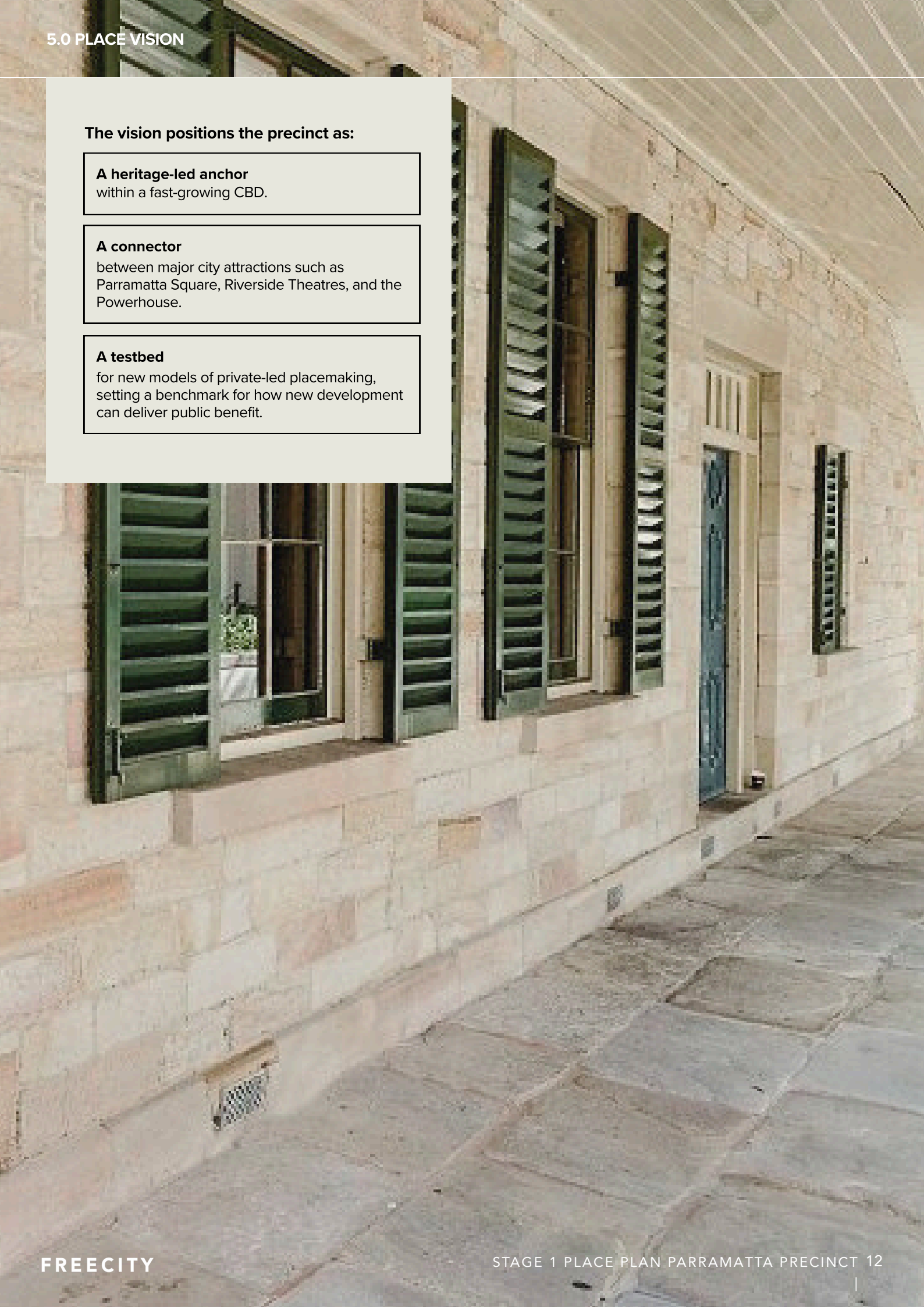


The vision positions the precinct as:

A heritage-led anchor
within a fast-growing CBD.

A connector
between major city attractions such as
Parramatta Square, Riverside Theatres, and the
Powerhouse.

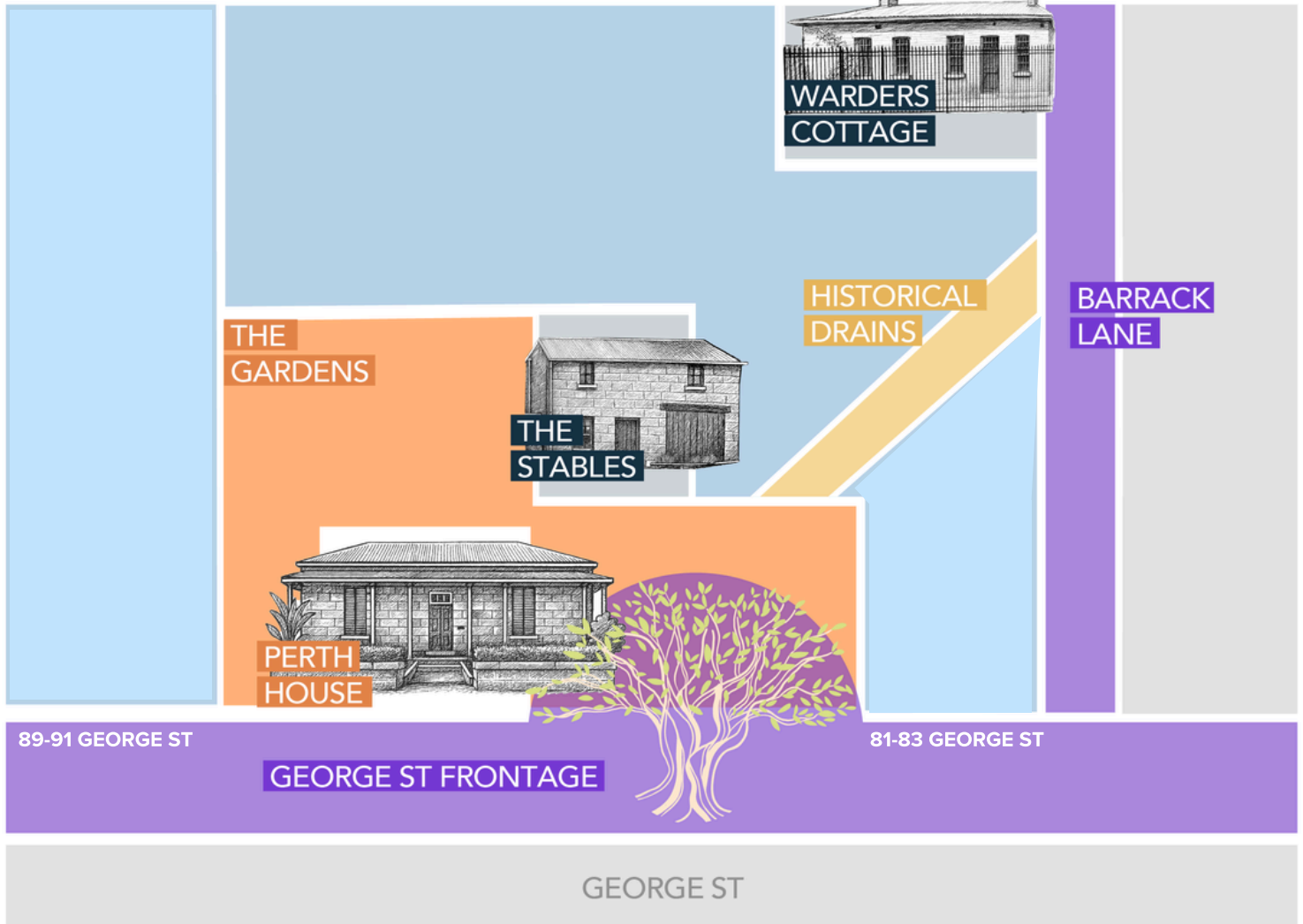
A testbed
for new models of private-led placemaking,
setting a benchmark for how new development
can deliver public benefit.



5.1 PRECINCT FRAMEWORK

GEORGE & BARRACK

Ground plane strategy | civic, cultural, and heritage layers



The stage 1 precinct framework identifies the extent of FREECITY’s landholdings within the George Street heritage cluster. The holdings include 81–83 George Street, 89–97 George Street, Perth House and The Stables, together forming the core of the FREECITY Parramatta site.

These properties sit within one of Parramatta’s most historically significant blocks, where heritage buildings, mature landscape and archaeology coexist with the evolving city centre. By defining the FREECITY landholdings the framework clarifies how these heritage places can be managed and interpreted together as a connected precinct rather than as separate sites.

This approach allows early works to focus on heritage conservation, interpretation and activation. It establishes a coordinated structure for uncovering and sharing the stories of Perth House, The Stables and their setting within the broader history of George Street.

The framework also highlights how these assets form a unified cultural address that anchors the street’s identity. It provides the foundation for heritage-led planning, ensuring that all future design, landscape and programming decisions respond to the site’s authentic historical fabric and the values it represents for Parramatta.

HERITAGE INTERPRETATION AND ACTIVATION

The heritage interpretation framework for Stage 1 focuses on uncovering, understanding and sharing the stories that define this place. Each heritage element within the precinct holds a distinct narrative about Parramatta’s early life, labour, and community. The aim is to bring these stories to the surface through creative interpretation, public programs, and careful design integration. Every initiative is guided by the principle that heritage is living, not static, and should be experienced, discussed and celebrated.

5.2 PERTH HOUSE AND GARDENS

Perth House is one of Parramatta’s earliest Georgian villas, built in the 1840s as a reflection of the city’s emerging prosperity and craftsmanship. Its architecture and gardens offer insight into domestic life and design from that period.



5.3 THE STABLES

The Stables once supported the daily workings of Perth House and represent the practical side of early life in Parramatta. Its modest scale and material character provide a strong contrast to the refined villa.



5.4 WARDERS COTTAGES

The Warders Cottages are closely tied to the story of the adjacent gaol and convict labour in Parramatta. These simple dwellings reveal the social conditions and working relationships of those who guarded and served the colony.



INTERACTIVE HOARDING IDEAS



5.5 HERITAGE FIG

The mature moreton bay fig tree is a living landmark and natural gathering point. It predates many surrounding buildings and has witnessed the site's evolution across centuries.



5.6 CONVICT DRAIN

The convict-built brick drain that runs beneath the site is a rare and important archaeological feature representing the labour and ingenuity of the early colony.



5.7 CONVICT WALL

The surviving wall fragments near Barrack Lane provide physical evidence of the boundaries and enclosures that defined early Parramatta. These walls connect to stories of labour, separation and resilience.



INTERACTIVE HOARDING IDEAS

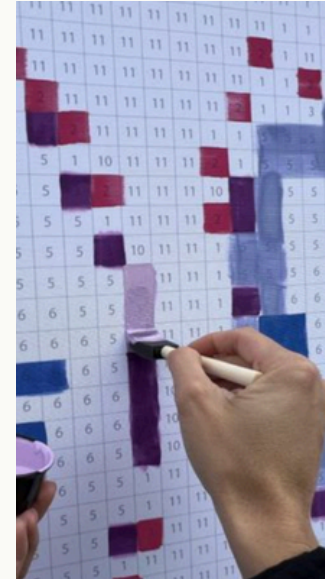


This section ensures that each heritage element contributes to a coherent interpretation framework. Together they transform the precinct into a place of learning and discovery, where the past is made visible, and heritage continues to shape Parramatta's cultural life.

5.8 GEORGE STREET & BARRACK LANE PRELIMINARY ACTIVATION CONCEPTS / IDEAS

Perth Pixel House

A collaborative painting wall where the public brings an image to life, pixel by pixel. Participants fill numbered or coded squares to reveal large-scale heritage imagery, blending individual creativity with a collective result. A playful activation that connects people to place through colour and interaction.



Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / recurring	Along Barrack Lane or at the George Street threshold, where pedestrians naturally pause.

The Fig Pulse

An evocative hoarding installation inspired by the deep roots and layered stories of the iconic fig tree. The layered forms represent the passage of time, each layer a metaphor for the years, people, and events that have shaped this place. Flowing organically through the wall, these abstract “roots” symbolise the pulse of the community: its past, its present, and its ongoing life.



Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / temporary	George Street frontage — integrated into hoardings, building façades, or laneway entries.

Small Eatries

Coffee pop-up designed to invite locals, workers and visitors to gather beneath the fig tree’s cultural shade. Architecture and form would take cues from the fig tree roots and flowing forms.



Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / temporary	At George Street corners or Barrack Lane junctions, where pedestrian flow is high.

5.9 PERTH HOUSE PRELIMINARY ACTIVATION CONCEPTS / IDEAS

Tree-Inspired Art

A curated program of exhibitions and art installations inspired by the Fig Tree and its themes, nature, growth, memory, and connection.

Local artists, sculptors, and makers will be invited to create works using natural materials or concepts of layering, roots, and time, reflecting both the physical and symbolic life of the tree.

Workshops and artist talks could further engage the public, offering opportunities to create collaborative pieces or learn about the Fig Tree’s significance in Parramatta’s story.



Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / recurring	Within the Perth House terrace or garden forecourt, suited for rotating artist installations, temporary sculptural displays and seasonal workshops.

The Living Pulse

An idea to explore bringing the pulse of the heritage fig tree to life through interactive light art. Projected lines, motion sensors and layered visual effects could trace the roots and rhythms of history flowing beneath the site. The installation might invite people to move through the space and create gentle ripples or waves of light that respond to their presence, symbolising how every person contributes to the living story of the place.



Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
medium / temporary	Could be located at the base of the fig tree or on the adjoining area, with the projection surface oriented toward the Perth House facade or garden edge. This concept would suit evening activations and seasonal events where light and movement can animate the heritage setting.

5.10 PERTH HOUSE GARDENS PRELIMINARY ACTIVATION CONCEPTS / IDEAS

Garden Sessions

A casual, drop-in space for food, music and community activity. Using small-scale, adaptable structures to create an inviting social heart. Supports local producers, brings life to the plaza, and fosters informal gathering through shared experiences of taste, sound and conversation.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / recurring	Near the Perth House Verandah or garden area — pop-up stalls, seating zones



Waves of the Fig Installation

A casual, drop-in space for food, music and community activity. Using small-scale, adaptable structures to create an inviting social heart. Supports local producers, brings life to Perth House grounds, and fosters informal gathering through shared experiences of taste, sound and conversation.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
medium / semi-permanent	Around Perth House grounds and verandah — sculptural benches, seating arcs, play elements



Pixels in the Garden

A flexible, modular installation designed to activate public space through seating, greenery, and playful elements. Encourages casual social interaction, invites all ages to engage with the space, and creates a dynamic layer of everyday culture within the heritage plaza.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
medium / semi-permanent	Around Perth House grounds and verandah — sculptural benches, seating arcs, and play elements integrated with planting.

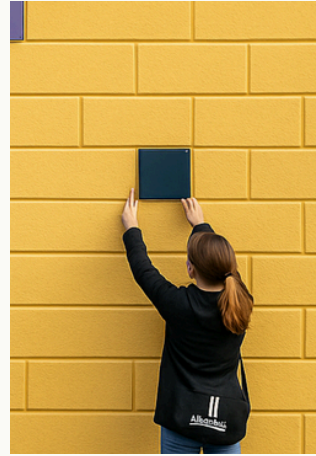


5.11 THE STABLES PRELIMINARY ACTIVATION CONCEPTS / IDEAS

Turn the Stone

An interactive flip wall that invites passersby to engage with the built environment. Inspired by historical masonry and digital pixel art, each rotating "stone" reveals new colours and patterns, encouraging playful interaction, dynamic messages, and evolving street art.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / recurring	Within The Stables courtyard as a tactile, playful element visible from George St.



Roots and Brews

Coffee pop-up designed to invite locals, workers and visitors to gather beneath the fig tree's cultural shade. Architecture and form would take cues from the fig tree roots and flowing forms.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / temporary	The Stables courtyard — a mobile kiosk or cart integrated with garden seating and event activity.



5.10 PERTH HOUSE GARDENS PRELIMINARY ACTIVATION CONCEPTS / IDEAS

Garden Sessions

A casual, drop-in space for food, music and community activity. Using small-scale, adaptable structures to create an inviting social heart. Supports local producers, brings life to the plaza, and fosters informal gathering through shared experiences of taste, sound and conversation.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
small / recurring	Near the Perth House Verandah or garden area — pop-up stalls, seating zones



Waves of the Fig Installation

A casual, drop-in space for food, music and community activity. Using small-scale, adaptable structures to create an inviting social heart. Supports local producers, brings life to Perth House grounds, and fosters informal gathering through shared experiences of taste, sound and conversation.

Scale & Duration	Opportunities & Location
medium / semi-permanent	Around Perth House grounds and verandah — sculptural benches, seating arcs, play elements



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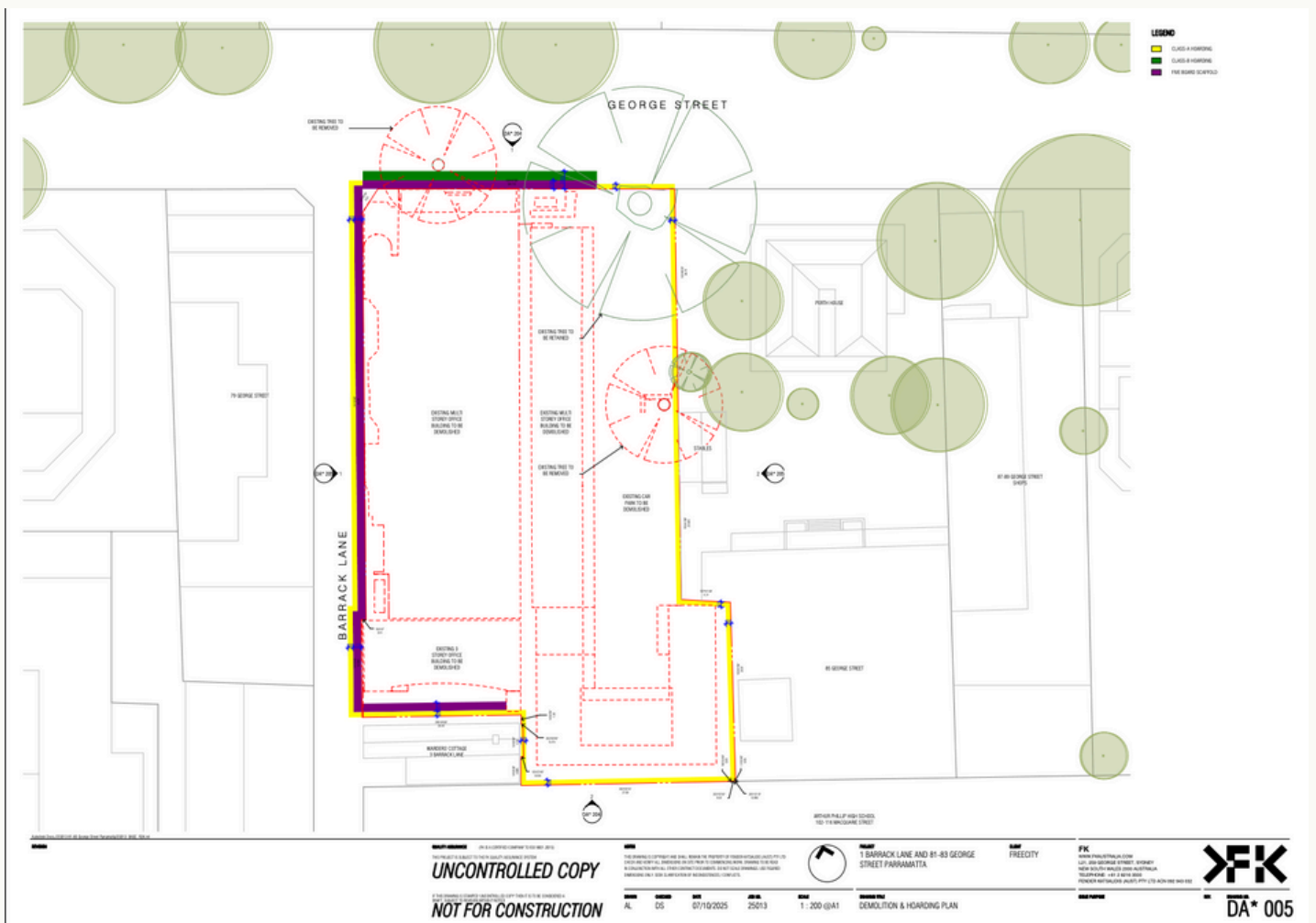
6.1 HERITAGE HOARDINGS FOR DEMOLITION

During demolition and early site works, it is intended to seek Council approval for heritage hoardings that will be installed along George Street and Barrack Lane to protect the heritage setting and share the stories of the site with the public.

The hoardings will serve both a practical and interpretive role, enclosing construction areas while presenting curated heritage content about Perth House, The Stables, the Warders Cottages, the convict drain and the fig tree.

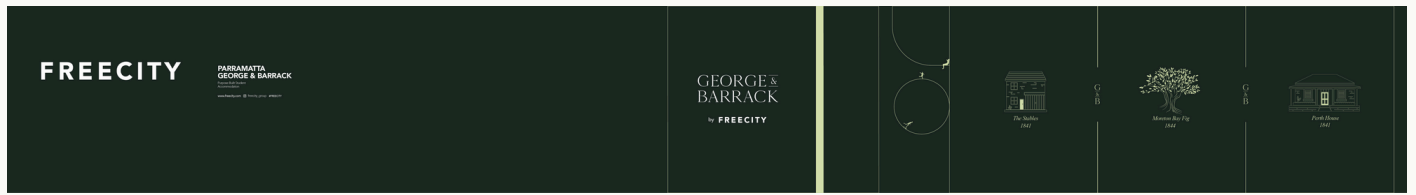
The design may include historical imagery, archival drawings, and QR codes linking to digital interpretation. This approach ensures that while physical access is restricted during works, the heritage narrative of the precinct remains visible and accessible to the community.

The map below identifies the location and extent of the proposed heritage hoardings along George Street and Barrack Lane. These hoardings will define the work zone for demolition while creating a curated public edge that maintains a visual and interpretive connection to the site’s heritage. The following page presents the proposed artwork concept, illustrating how heritage stories and site imagery will be integrated into the hoarding design to enrich the streetscape during the construction period.



INTERACTIVE HOARDING IDEAS

6.1 HERITAGE HOARDINGS FOR DEMOLITION - ARTIST MOCK-UP



FREECITY

 people
place and
partnership