

# EMBRACING THE RIVER CITY

**Opportunities for successfully integrating  
Powerhouse Parramatta into the River City**



**CITY OF PARRAMATTA**  
**June 2020**



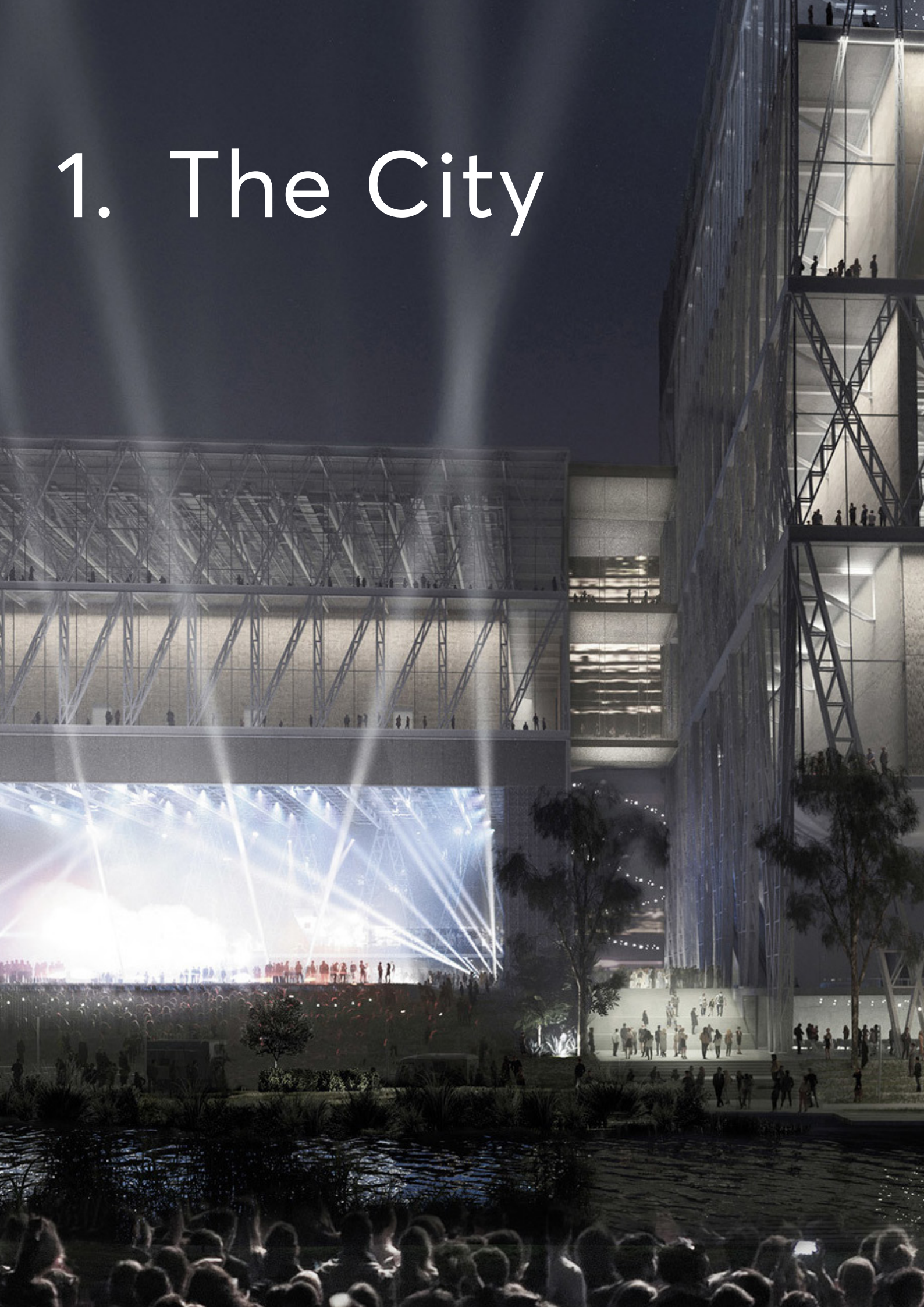


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# 1. The City





# Introduction

## POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA & SYDNEY'S CENTRAL RIVER CITY

Parramatta is transforming at an unprecedented pace and scale. By 2036 the CBD will accommodate an extra 9,366 dwellings, 20,343 residents and 83,000 workers. By 2021 the City's economic growth rate is forecast to nearly double to 4.6% per annum.

State and Local Government strategic planning guides the City's growth. Central to this transformation is the City of Parramatta's vision to be Sydney's Central River City; sustainable liveable and productive – inspired by our communities.

The NSW State Government's vision to cultivate a cultural precinct in the Parramatta CBD featuring Powerhouse Parramatta, the biggest museum in

NSW, is an opportunity to address the historical lack of investment for the arts and culture in Western Sydney.

Better distributing the social and cultural infrastructure within the Greater Sydney Area will increase community access and engagement, while returning investment benefits in local infrastructure and employment across a range of sectors.

It can also be a city shaping opportunity, to see Parramatta take another step to becoming 'Greater Sydney's true centre – the connected, unifying heart'.



Parramatta is transforming into Sydney's Central River City  
(image: City of Parramatta)



# City Integration

## THE CHALLENGE

To achieve a world class cultural precinct, high quality architecture needs to be calibrated to its setting with high quality urban design, so that it seamlessly connects and integrates with its surrounds. This integration will enhance both the experience of visitors to the museum, and the experience of the city by all.

The museum sits within a historic city centre of streets and heritage items, adjacent a living river system. At the intersection of the river corridor and the new civic link corridor, it is poised at a climactic moment in the city's plan. Powerhouse Parramatta and Riverside Theatres are at the heart of the cultural precinct, and these buildings will be settings for welcoming public activation and events and will signal the creativity that happens within.

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document offers opportunities for exploration in the next stage of design development of this major new cultural destination. If secured, the museum will successfully integrate with the city and realise the shared ambition for an interconnected cultural precinct woven into the urban fabric, values and life of Parramatta.

The opportunities that will ensure this development integrates beautifully with the existing and planned structure of the city centre are to:

1. Celebrate the heritage and stories of our City.
2. Embrace the riverside setting
3. Host civic gathering at the river's edge
4. Continue the upper promenade at the city's edge.
5. Connect Civic Link to the river
6. Address the city's streets and lanes



# Strategic Context

## ENDORSED STRATEGIES

Distinct cultural offerings and a compelling public domain are essential to realising the Central River City vision. The City of Parramatta has built on the State and Local Government strategic planning framework through a series of endorsed strategic plans, including:

- Culture and our City: A Cultural Plan for Parramatta's CBD 2017-2022 (The Cultural Plan);
- The Parramatta City River Strategy 2015;
- The Civic Link Framework Plan 2017; and
- The Draft Civic Link DCP 2019.

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Additional statutory and guiding plans help provide direction regarding the role Powerhouse Parramatta and its public domain can play in developing a distinct, vibrant, and connected Cultural Precinct and City.

- Parramatta Local Environmental Plan 2011
- Parramatta CBD Planning Proposal (Currently Being Prepared)
- Parramatta Development Control Plan (DCP) 2011
- City River Public Domain Guidelines (Currently Being Prepared)
- Parramatta Public Domain Guidelines 2017

## OTHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2017
- Local Strategic Planning Framework 2020
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021
- Smart City Masterplan 2015
- Parramatta Bike Plan 2017
- Parramatta CBD Pedestrian Strategy 2017
- Public Art Policy 2003
- Public Art Guidelines for Development
- Heritage Interpretation Guidelines for Development
- Parramatta Ways Walking Strategy 2017
- Parramatta Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2017
- Socially Sustainable Parramatta Framework 2017



An aerial photograph of the Parramatta CBD in Sydney, Australia. A central green corridor, highlighted with a bright green glow and surrounded by trees, runs through the heart of the city. This corridor is flanked by tall, modern skyscrapers and older buildings. The image is overlaid with a pattern of small, light blue dots. The text is contained within a white rectangular box on the right side of the image.

## CIVIC LINK FRAMEWORK PLAN & DRAFT CIVIC LINK DCP

The Civic Link Framework Plan establishes the City's aspiration to create a green, pedestrianised public space and cultural spine through the Parramatta CBD.

The draft Civic Link DCP refines the Framework Plan and identifies new public open spaces, streets, and laneways, guides property access and servicing, and describes how future buildings will interact with public spaces.

The Civic Link will be: **connected**, providing a major pedestrian boulevard through the city; **green**, delivering innovative environmental outcomes and improving water quality; **cultural**, drawing people on a journey of discovery and surprise that connects Parramatta Square to the Powerhouse and the River; and **fine-grain**, with human-scale architecture that invites activity day and night.





## PARRAMATTA CITY RIVER STRATEGY

The City River Strategy sets out a framework for transforming the River Foreshore into an activated, safe and green public space that is integrated with the CBD, flood resilient, and that celebrates Parramatta's history and culture.

Key objectives of the Strategy include: an **integrated City and River** where buildings and landscape are seamlessly united; a **safe river** that facilitates passive surveillance and flood evacuation; a **connected river** that unites regional and local corridors for effortless travel; an **activated river** that is part of the everyday life of the City; a **distinct foreshore character** that celebrates the cultural values associated with the Parramatta River; and **art and heritage experiences** that acknowledge the historical and contemporary importance of the River and create an memorable visitor journey.

# Guiding Principles

With an overall objective for the museum to be responsive to its setting, the recommended opportunities are shaped by the following key considerations and their guiding principles:

## HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- Respect the history and heritage of the site in a considered way
- Acknowledge and reflect the site's high social and spiritual Dharug community's significance.
- Meaningfully address the Parramatta Sand Body (PSB) and potential Aboriginal archaeological deposit in the site.

## FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

- Through resilient design respond to nuisance flooding, high hazard flooding and flash flooding that affect the site frequently.
- Employ innovative flood resilience solutions that support the site as a major destination.
- Provide Shelter in Place Facilities to protect visitors to the museum and surrounding precinct.

## ENVIRONMENT AND MICROCLIMATE

- Facilitate public engagement with the Parramatta River through a design that achieves integration between the museum, the foreshore and the river.
- Reduce urban heat island effect with building design and provision of planting and soft landscaping within its site.
- Utilise design innovation and leadership to minimise environmental footprint, waste, and energy and water consumption.

## PUBLIC ART & HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

- Support best practice art and interpretation process, recognising a key cultural location within the City.
- Celebrate the site's ongoing cultural significance to Aboriginal people including potential for state significant Aboriginal archaeological and historical deposits.
- Acknowledge and respond to the site's location within the First Nations Walk

## ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

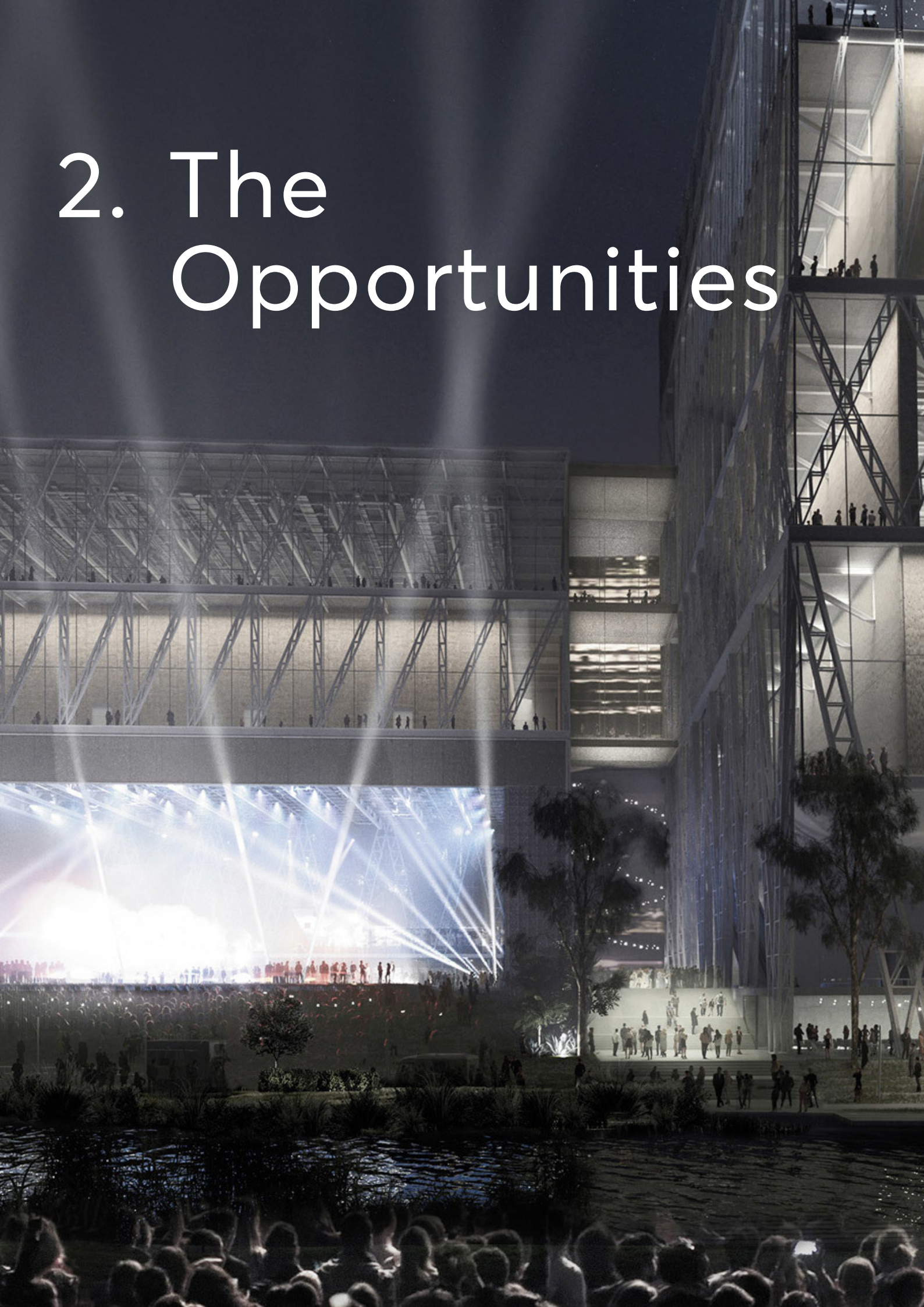
- Define legible connections to the future Civic Link and the Parramatta Valley Cycleway, strengthening the city's pedestrian and cyclist circulation.
- Integrate site topography and solutions for universal access that maximise connectivity
- Strengthen accessibility by providing connections to the surrounding context.

## EVENTS & ACTIVATION

- Facilitate current and future active recreation envisaged for the River water body
- Maximise opportunities for uses of the river foreshore and facilitate large scale civic events.
- Maximise activation to lanes and streets, creating vibrant places and supporting passive surveillance.



# 2. The Opportunities



# 1. Celebrate the Heritage and Stories of Our City

The museum can make culture more visible in the public domain and gift the city with greater cultural vibrancy and authenticity. In the context of this major planned development, retaining and adaptively reusing built heritage can demonstrate a distinct and confident identity to the rest of world. Distinction and confidence on a world stage will also be achieved by recognising through art and interpretation that Parramatta and its river has always been an important meeting place for Aboriginal peoples, and the significance of this area for all peoples as a site of early colonial contact.

## Opportunity 1

To respect the history and heritage of the site in a considered way.

## Opportunity 2

Interpretation and public art which brings to light indigenous culture, responding to the site's history and integrating with the larger story told across the City landscape.



### 'EYES OF THE LAND AND WATER'

Commissioned to mark the 250th anniversary of the first contact between the crew of HMB Endeavour and the Gweagal people on the shores of Botany Bay. (Alison Page with Nik Lachaczak)



### BIRRARUNG WILAM (COMMON GROUND)

Located in Birrarung Marr, Melbourne (Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch and Treahna Hamm), an environmental art project made up of several interrelated elements that celebrate the physical and spiritual connections between Indigenous people and place





## 2. Embrace the Riverside Setting

The museum precinct can be a climactic moment in the City River corridor, where the landscape expands in scale and is shaped for both everyday enjoyment and moments of civic gathering. A place of diverse settings and engagement with the River's edge, it will be a place of confluence, where the civic link corridor connects people to the river, and on to connections across and along the river.

### Opportunity 1

A tiered landscape that utilises the level changes between city and river to unite the two spaces into a cohesive whole; address the river foreshore at a human scale; seamlessly integrate universal access ramps into the landscape; and create opportunities for informal seating and passive recreation.

### Opportunity 2

Multiple, universally-accessible routes to the lower foreshore and up to the City allow easy connection to enjoy the river, and safe evacuation to higher ground during flood.

### Opportunity 3

A generous 6m-wide continuous shared path for pedestrians and cyclists along the lower river foreshore that caters for the intensity of this intersection of two city movement corridors with a major cultural destination.

### Opportunity 4

A rich array of recreational settings at the River's edge, welcoming and accessible for all members of the community, provisioned to promote everyday activation, and supported by ancillary facilities such as a boat launch and storage, generous shade, pause points, seating for groups, and spaces for outdoor classrooms and engagement with the water.

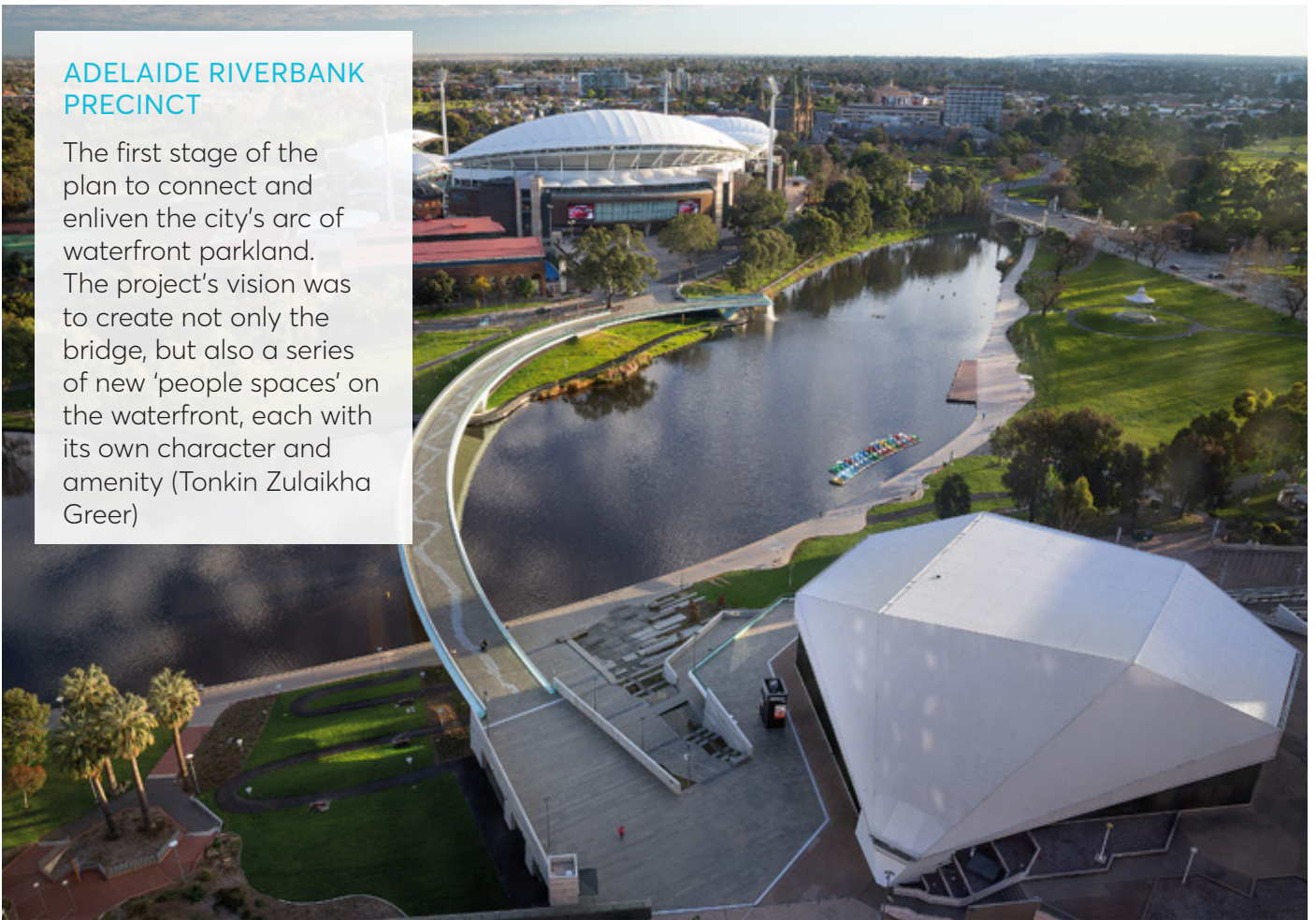
### Opportunity 5

An overall landscape form and construction detail that seamlessly integrates flood conveyance into the landscape design with infrastructure resilient to inundation.



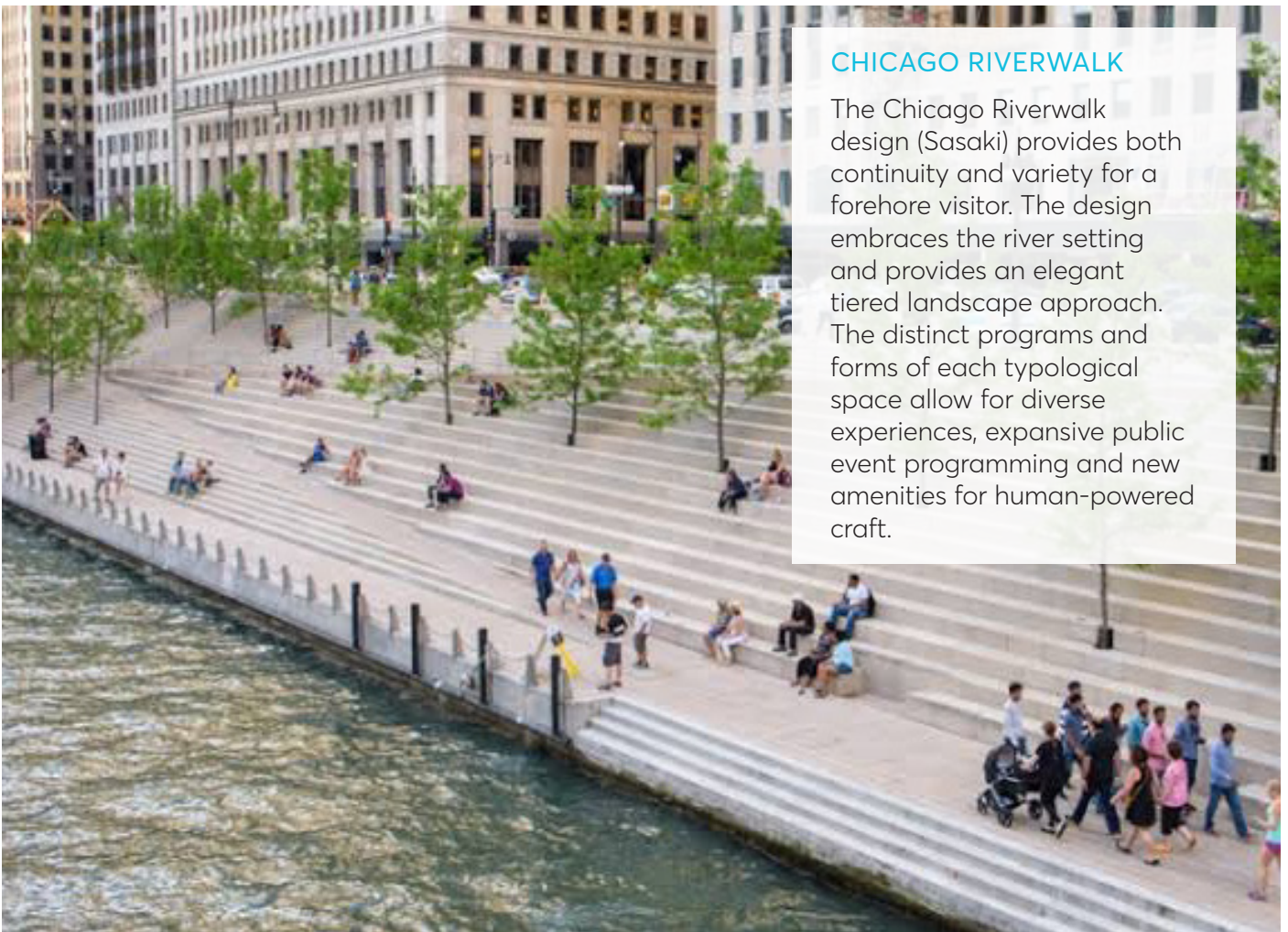
## ADELAIDE RIVERBANK PRECINCT

The first stage of the plan to connect and enliven the city's arc of waterfront parkland. The project's vision was to create not only the bridge, but also a series of new 'people spaces' on the waterfront, each with its own character and amenity (Tonkin Zulaikha Greer)



## CHICAGO RIVERWALK

The Chicago Riverwalk design (Sasaki) provides both continuity and variety for a forehore visitor. The design embraces the river setting and provides an elegant tiered landscape approach. The distinct programs and forms of each typological space allow for diverse experiences, expansive public event programming and new amenities for human-powered craft.



### 3. Host Civic Gatherings at the River's Edge

The colocation of New Powerhouse, Civic Link and City River corridors creates a natural confluence point in the City Centre for civic gathering, celebration and shared cultural experiences. The opportunity to create within the landscape a purpose built space of sufficient scale and provisioned to facilitate flexible use can also become a key moment in a landmark landscape design.

#### Opportunity 1

A major event space within the public domain of at least 5,000sqm integrated with the wider foreshore landscape and able to work contiguously with other foreshore spaces for integrated events along the whole river corridor, or as a single site, for civic and community events or for Powerhouse associated programming.

#### Opportunity 2

A flexible space that can accommodate a range of uses by including amphitheatre seating, spatial and key services provision for outdoor cinema and live performance. General recreation spaces are cleverly collocated with public amenities and food and beverage offerings to enhance social amenity in non-event mode.

#### Opportunity 3

Access and egress routes appropriate to event space capacities are integrated into the design to ensure the landscape can support event and emergency evacuation, as well as loading and servicing needs, without impacting the amenity of the setting.



### HAFENCITY, GERMANY

In HafenCity, a wide embankment promenade running the entire perimeter of the docks has been built at 4.5m above sea level and is linked to street level via a series of ramps, steps and terraced green spaces and plazas. The area is designed to withstand severe flooding approximately two to three times a year. All sections of the promenade/ terrace system are richly detailed in their design and layout, and generously supplied with trees, plantings, places to sit and other amenities such as play spaces, cafes and kiosks. With universal access and egress to upper levels, and use by pedestrians and cyclists, the system provides a seamless integration of the upper levels of HafenCity with the waterfront.



HafenCity Flood Resilient Terraced Landscape  
(image: ELBE&FLUT)

### OSLO OPERA HOUSE, OSLO, NORWAY

In Oslo, a major cultural venue is seamlessly integrated with a destination foreshore public space. The sloped building form (Snohetta) provides multilevel access and large spaces for events and gatherings. A combination of insitu seating elements and temporary cafe seating draw activity to the foreshore



## 4. Continue an Upper Promenade along the City's Edge

The upper promenade defines a distinct journey along the southern City River Foreshore and is a key element in the City's River Strategy. A generous and continuous public walkway is framed by views of the river and redefines the river's edge as a destination for cultural venues, outdoor dining and retail. Powerhouse Parramatta is celebrated as a major destination and is knitted into the City, connecting the lower foreshore public domain to Church Street 'Eat Street', Phillip Street and Civic Link. Access and egress along the river corridor are enhanced and supports flood evacuation, event management and universal accessibility.

### Opportunity 1

A continuous 4.5m wide Upper Promenade sited above the flood planning level connects Wilde Avenue to Church Street through the museum, and is publicly accessible 24/7. A suite of public domain elements integrates the Powerhouse Upper Promenade with the broader City River Upper Promenade and signals the Powerhouse and its square as a major city destination.

### Opportunity 2

An integrated pedestrian and cycle network links the Upper Promenade to the lower river foreshore and to the city via frequent, universally accessible paths of travel, not reliant on lifts, for all people. Generous and easy connections to Lennox Bridge, Civic Link and Wilde Street improve permeability between the city and the river and enhance access to Powerhouse Parramatta





## CENTRAL PROMENADE, TEL AVIV

A new city scale promenade (Mayslits Kassif Architects) replaces a former boardwalk and barrier to the waterfront to create a continuous habitable edge to the city. The promenade integrates ramps and stairs to cater to all levels of mobility. A considered palette of public domain elements unify the waterfront along its length.



## PEREZ MUSEUM MIAMI BEACH

The Perez Museum in Miami Beach (Herzog & de Meuron) responds to its location on the Biscayne Bay through a terraced urban verandah that creates a gradual transition between interior and exterior.

The framework is on an elevated platform with a raised walkway surrounding the building in order to protect people and infrastructure against flooding.

The four-storey high urban verandah offers generous views over the Bay and has tropical plants interwoven into its design, connecting architecture and environment.



## 5. Connect Civic Link to the River

Civic Link is a continuous green, pedestrianised, cultural spine linking the heart of the CBD to Powerhouse Parramatta and beyond to River's Edge. The Powerhouse Parramatta spatially and visually frames Civic Link and defines a generous, activated route through the site and down the riverbank to the foreshore, inviting visitors day and night.

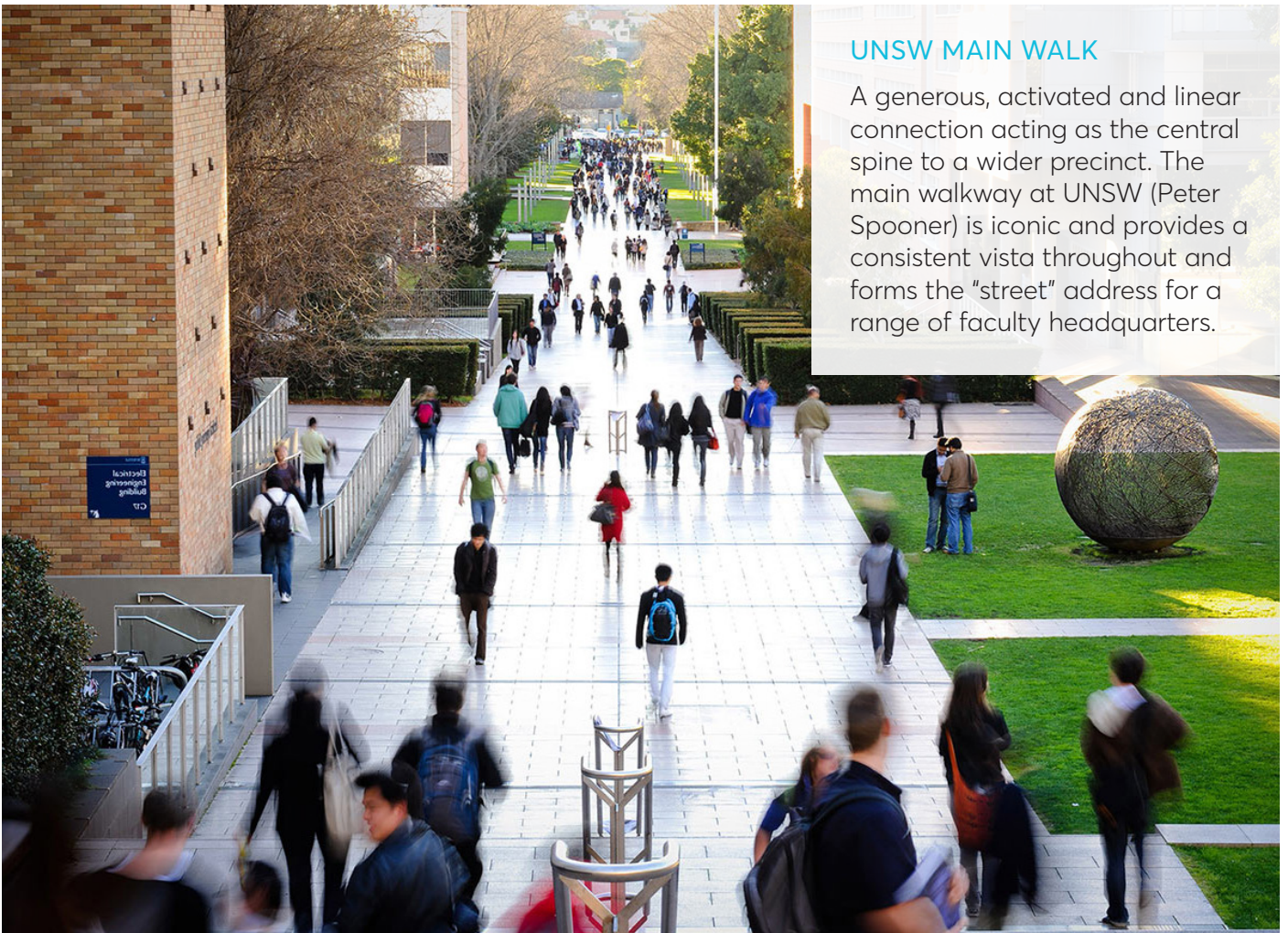
### Opportunity 1

A 20m wide Civic Link alignment through the Powerhouse Parramatta site frames a legible view corridor through to the River and a generous physical space between the museum wings. It invites entry to the museum, river square and foreshore beyond. Civic Link intersects with the museum entry and ground floor uses and links to the upper promenade with 24/7 access and accessible connections to the river foreshore. Continuity of tree planting or major artwork define Civic Link through the museum enhancing its legibility and character, while contributing a pleasant sensory experience for the museum visitor.

### Opportunity 2

Multifunction use of Civic Link and River Foreshore facilitates safety, access and management of the public realm. This includes enabling shared access for both cyclist and pedestrians; facilitating foreshore evacuation route in both overland and river flooding events; and supporting event and emergency access by providing adequate structural loading and temporary access.





## UNSW MAIN WALK

A generous, activated and linear connection acting as the central spine to a wider precinct. The main walkway at UNSW (Peter Spooner) is iconic and provides a consistent vista throughout and forms the "street" address for a range of faculty headquarters.



## THE SEQUENCE, ARNE QUINZE

The Sequence is a light and soundscape installation by Arne Quinze. The installation stretches 80 meters and stands at a height of 15 meters. The sculpture generates movement in the city and creates a bridge between people.

A canopy style artwork that illuminates the public domain can act as an iconic work in a high-profile location and a highlight to a journey through a compressed space to a moment of release beyond.

## 6. Address the City Streets and Lanes

The streets make up most of the public domain of our City Centre, and need to be safe spaces for transit and convivial places for daily life. The redevelopment of the precinct can create generous and elegant street frontages that engage with the city, furnished with trees and public domain elements in accordance with city centre standards and materials.

### Opportunity 1

Phillip Street, at the Museum's edge can welcome visitors with a lively streetscape that is comfortable and easy to navigate, where servicing, and coach pick-up and drop-off facilities do not encroach desire lines or sight lines.

### Opportunity 2

Wilde Avenue will provide easy and safe movement for pedestrians, cyclists and buses across the Parramatta River with generous footpaths and potentially, integrated awnings and seating to serve bus patrons.

### Opportunity 3

Dirrabarri Lane can facilitate safe and legible access and circulation of all users through the precinct by deploying the urban design techniques of a shared zone to a high civic standard.

### Opportunity 4

George Khattar Lane can be a recessive vehicular access point to the lower foreshore pedestrian environment that facilitates minimal event, maintenance and emergency access, and promotes pedestrian and cycling priority in a parkland setting.





### CITY OF SYDNEY STREETS

Well designed, consistent palette of street furniture elements are consistently located and generously deployed throughout the city



### STEAM MILL LANE DARLING SQUARE

This fine grained pedestrian laneway, furnished to support activation and linking between city streets and civic destinations is detailed and executed in quality materials.





**City of Parramatta Council 2020**