



Central Highfields Master Plan

Stage 1 Community Engagement Report

Prepared for Toowoomba Regional Council by
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PRIMUS Pty Ltd

PEOPLE CENTRED, RESULTS FOCUSSED

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Executive summary

Between October 2017 and July 2018, Toowoomba Regional Council (Council) will develop a Master Plan for Central Highfields which will ultimately inform an amendment to the Planning Scheme.

The area to be covered by this Plan is shown on the map below.



Stage 1 of this process – Community Engagement – was successfully completed during October-November 2017. During this stage, Council engaged with more than 200 people to elicit their views on two key considerations:

- Values, and
- Vision for the future of Central Highfields.

This report presents the findings of this engagement stage, grouped according to seven identified Value themes:

1. Belonging, Family, Community and Neighbours
2. Distinct Identity
3. Space
4. Trees and Nature
5. Accessibility and Connectivity
6. Safety and Security
7. Economy and Growth

The report delivers on Council's commitment to provide feedback to those who participated in the engagement process, as well as other interested stakeholders.

The information in this report will now be used by Council to develop options, which will be presented back to the community and other stakeholders for further input during February-March 2018, as part of Stage 2 Engagement.

Intent of the engagement process

The intent of this process is to ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to influence the direction of the Central Highfields Master Plan and derive a sense of ownership from the experience.

Community engagement can and should be an exercise in social capital-building. The current project provides an important opportunity for the Highfields community to connect, reflect, influence and celebrate.

During Stage 1 Engagement on the development of the Central Highfields Master Plan, the Project Team has taken pains to ensure that participants know that their input can genuinely shape the outcomes.

This engagement has taken a 'clean slate' approach; facilitators at workshops and targeted consultations have not provided input in the form of ideas, suggestions or options, but rather have focused on listening.

Participants have learned more about their community and its projected future, building their individual and collective capacity.

Importantly, Council now has the consolidated input of more than 200 individuals to help shape its initial options for the Master Plan.

Engagement has been consistent with Council's Community Engagement Policy, with the Queensland Government's 'Community Engagement Toolkit for Planning', and with the Community Engagement Plan developed by the Project Team.

The Project Team

The Project Team comprised these Toowoomba Regional Council officers:

- Mr Heath Martin, Principal Planner Land Use & Community
- Ms Jade Bebbington, Principal Regional Design and Development
- Mr Rodney Betts, Manager Transport and Drainage Planning
- Mr David Krumins, Manager Regional Architecture and Heritage
- Mr Trevor Mitchell, Coordinator Stakeholder Engagement
- Ms Ann Whitton, Principal Urban Designer

as well as these external consultants with specific expertise in various aspects of community engagement:

- Ms Carey Crimmins, Project Lead
- Ms Kate Tully, Senior Consultant
- Dr Barbara Ryan, Communications Advisor
- Mr Glen Crimmins, Project Coordinator
- Ms Phoebe Tully, Social Media Strategist

The work was also guided by a Steering Group comprising:

- Cr Anne Glasheen
- Mr Stewart Somers, General Manager Planning and Development
- Ms Paula Grant, Manager Strategic Planning and Economic Development
- Mr Daniel Loader, Acting Manager Stakeholder Engagement and Communications
- and members of the Project Team.

Whom we engaged and how

One of the first tasks of the project team was to identify relevant stakeholders – those who will be impacted by the Master Plan and who wish to contribute to its development. Eight major stakeholder groups were identified, and the project team planned forms of engagement appropriate to each group; these are summarised in the table below.

Stakeholder group	Engagement details	People engaged
Major commercial landowners (e.g. shopping centre, tavern)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone contact from Project Team • Written invitation to 1:1 meetings • Meetings with member/s of Project Team 	4
Business community (Highfields & District Business Connections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone contact from Project Team • Written invitation to 1:1 meeting • Meeting with member/s of Project Team 	3
Community groups (e.g. Highfields Community Heart, Friends of Rogers Reserve, two secondary colleges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone contact from Project Team • Written invitation to targeted workshop • Targeted workshop 6/11/17 • Facilitated workshop with students from Highfields State Secondary College 	Targeted workshop: 15 HSSC: 22
Community members	<p><u>For affected landowners (in or adjoining Master Plan area):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written invitation to workshop • Targeted workshop 2/11/17 <p><u>For other community members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community workshops open to the public 13, 21, 22 and 25/11/17 • Facebook group, monitored daily 	Targeted workshop: 28 Community workshops: 61 Facebook: 104
Toowoomba Regional Council (Councillors and relevant internal stakeholders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct consultation • Targeted workshop 8/11/17 	11

MPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter regarding the planning process and an invitation to engage 	2
State Government agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted workshop 8/11/17 	12
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about the process Invitation to attend media briefing Invitation to attend workshops 	5
	Total no. engagements	267

In addition to these targeted engagements, other activities included:

- Distribution of some 5,000 flyers to every household and business in the Highfields area, letting people know about the process and ways to get involved;
- Distribution of a further 1,000 flyers through Council's Service Centre, Library etc;
- Comprehensive information on Council's 'Your Say' website, including FAQs, engagement principles and workshop details; and
- Advertising in the Highfields and Toowoomba newspapers.

I felt the Central Highfields engagement process promoted very open discussion and I found that everyone was open to listening to ideas. The way the workshops were facilitated encouraged an awareness about the needs of the broader Highfields demographic by prompting us to think from a range of different perspectives. Being in the group discussion helped me see what the whole community might need in the future.
Natalie Brownlie, Highfields resident and workshop attendee



The flyer distributed to more than 5,000 addresses in Highfields

What we asked

The engagement process sought to gather data from the Highfields community about their values for Highfields both now and into the future and their vision (and ideas) for the future of the central precinct.

The facilitation of engagement processes was kept as consistent as possible across the range of engagement mechanisms including the one-on-one sessions; larger group workshops and within the online Facebook group.



Project Team member Jade Bebbington facilitates a group at a community engagement workshop

The various engagement mechanisms:

- Emphasised that this was a 'clean-slate' approach designed to genuinely hear the views, values and visions of the Highfields community – and that the intent throughout the process would be to listen and collect information; not to provide a Council view;
- Provided an overview of the three stages of the consultation process and an overview about the need for and scope of a Master Plan;
- Explored the Values of community members via facilitated discussion in small groups of 5-8 people;
- Explored people's values from three different perspectives:
 - 1) their own individual perspective;
 - 2) from the perspective of another (eg. a child, a teenager, a person with a disability, an older person, a mother with a pram, a tourist, a business person, someone moving from overseas); and
 - 3) a whole of community perspective;
- Worked to understand the community's picture of Highfields in the future and what it might look like in terms of space, urban form and the built

environment. It did this by asking people to imagine they were in a helicopter in 2030 looking down at Central Highfields. What did they see? What were people doing? Where are they going? How did they get there? From both a Helicopter and then a street level view, table facilitators asked questions to understand what the community saw for elements such as building height – density - types of buildings (commercial, residential); cars and parking – location, aesthetic; transport; access and open space;

- Encouraged community members to share images of town centres, streetscapes and parks that have appeal; and
- Emphasised a desire to keep the community involved in all three stages of the Central Highfields Master Plan engagement process.



Groups at a facilitated workshop, and an example of a group's input to planning.

It is worth noting that some of the engagements did not seek to collect the values of participants who were not directly associated with or residents of Highfields. For example, meetings with commercial land owners (who own commercial property but who are not residents of Highfields), and State Government Representatives (who are able to identify the State's interests about a Master Planning issue, but who do not hold personal values for living in Highfields).

What we heard

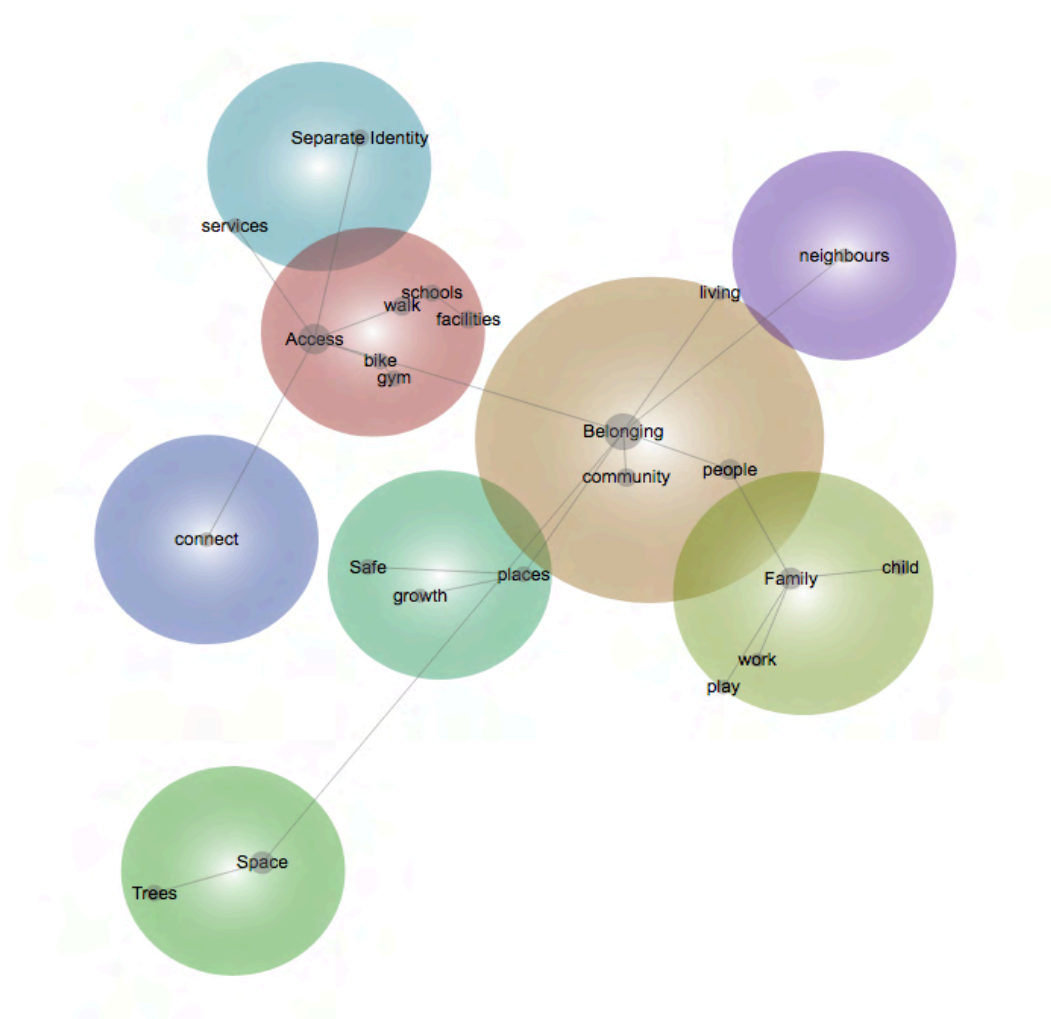
Data collected throughout the engagement process was first summarised by the facilitator of the session (or the small group facilitator) and then analysed in two ways:

- 1) Via the qualitative analysis tool Leximancer – which was used to theme the key values identified by the community; and
- 2) Via the creation of an Excel database – which was used to explore the relationships between values and the community's future vision for Central Highfields.

Core values

Seven core values were identified via the qualitative analysis of data (via Leximancer software); these are shown graphically in the 'concept map' below.

- 1) BELONGING, FAMILY, COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURS
- 2) DISTINCT IDENTITY
- 3) SPACE
- 4) TREES AND NATURE
- 5) ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY
- 6) SAFETY AND SECURITY
- 7) ECONOMY AND GROWTH



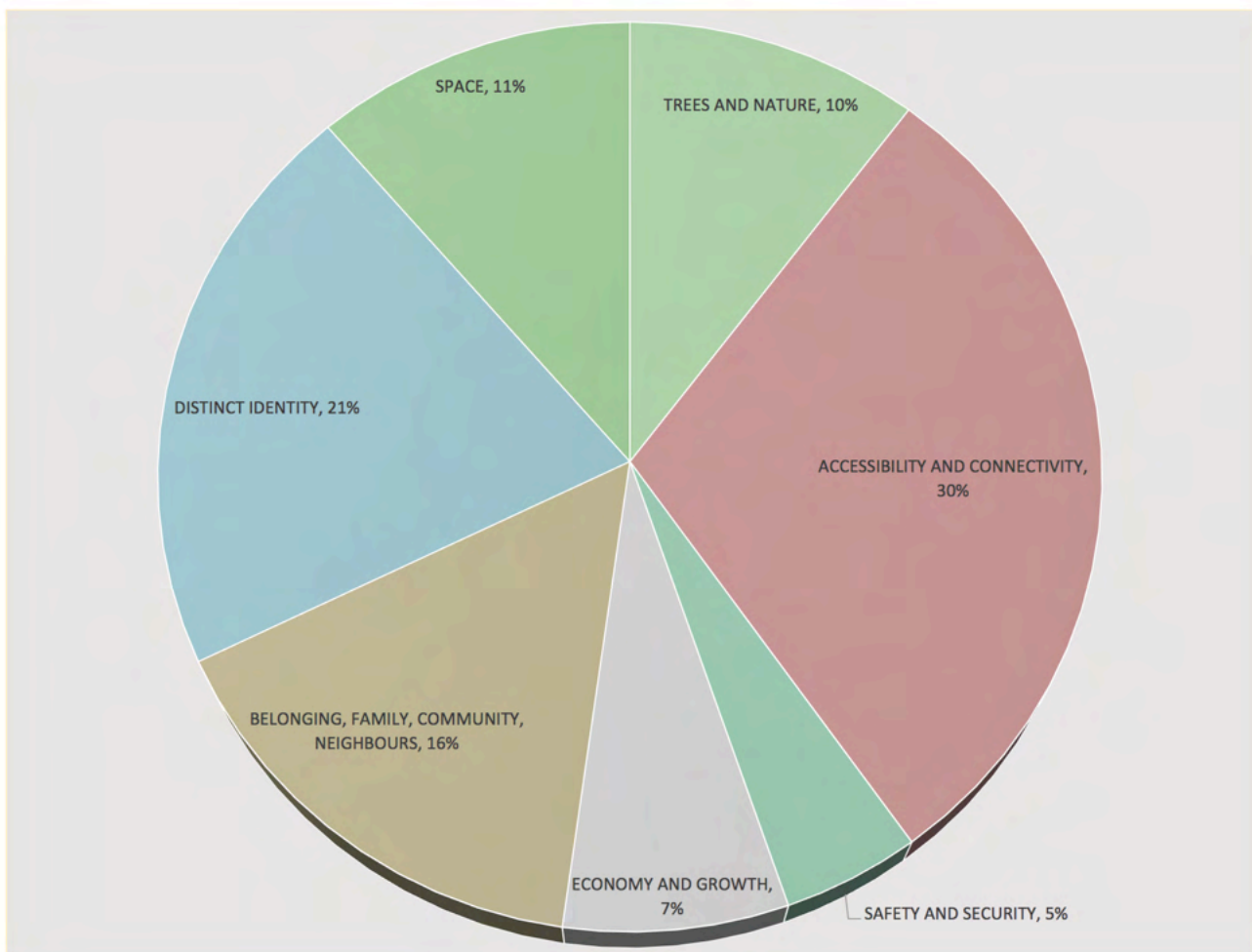
How to interpret the Concept Map

- Each of the words on the map represents a concept eg. belonging, community, people.
- The size of the dot suggests how strongly that concept was interconnected with other concepts in the data.
- The coloured circles represent thematic groupings of concepts. For example, the concepts of belonging, community and people are surrounded by a brown circle. The brown circle represents a connection between the statements within the data. It tells us that belonging, community and people recurred *together* in the data far more often than a concept like 'space' which is quite separate.

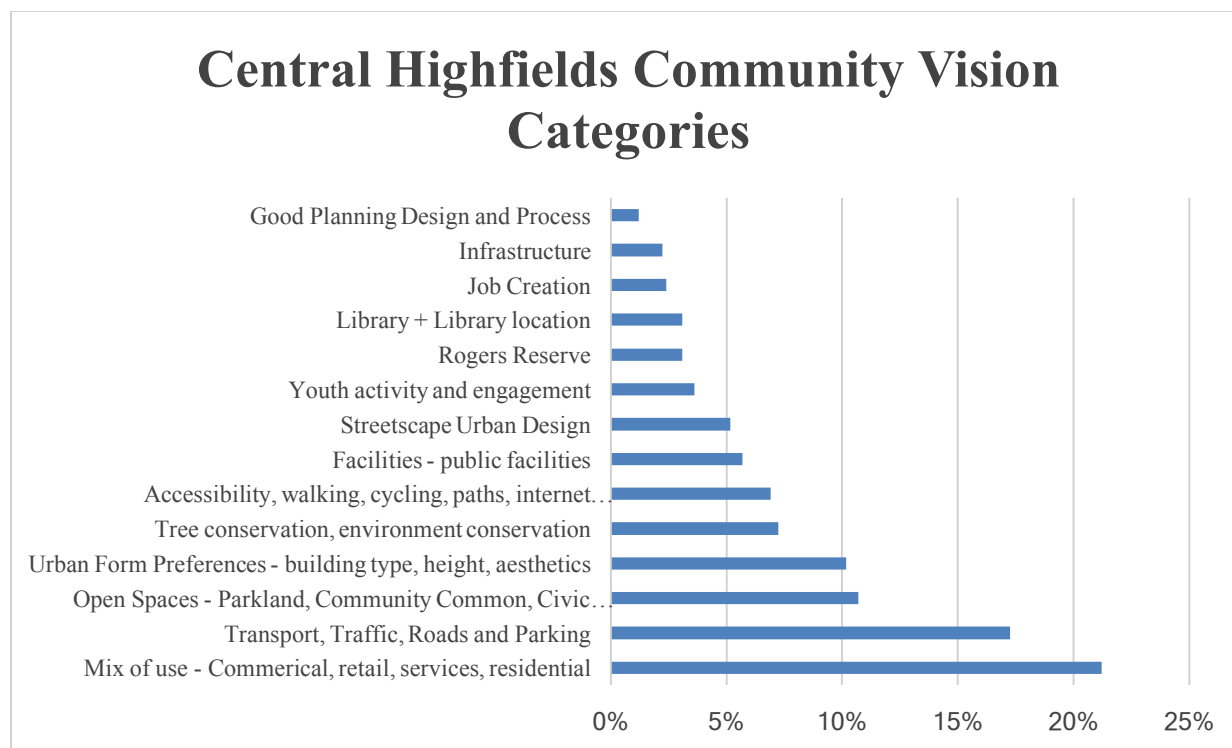
Community vision (and ideas) for Central Highfields

The links between the values (above) and the input received from the community about their vision for the area were explored. The chart below provides a graphical representation about the extent to which the values were represented in the overall data. For example, 21% of the ideas put forward during discussions about Vision fell into the Value category of Distinct Identity.

Values representation by %



The community vision and ideas for Central Highfields fell broadly into 14 different categories as represented in the following chart. The chart shows what proportion of input relates to each of these categories.



Consolidated input

An effort was made to establish whether the data collected from different demographic groups (e.g. school students and the 25-45 year age group) and via other modes (e.g. Facebook) provided alternate insights or differences worthy of note. The finding was that the data from all stakeholder demographic groups collected via the variety of modes was largely consistent and that further study was not warranted.

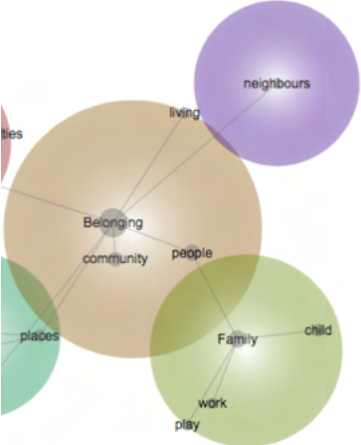
Consultation summary

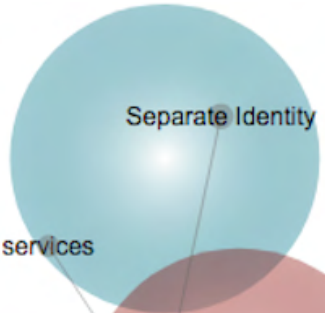
The following pages represent the key output from Stage 1 Engagement: a summary of the consolidated data collected, clearly showing the links between the Values identified and the Vision (and range of ideas) raised by the Highfields community.

The left-hand column shows the Value and provides an explanation of the characteristics of that Value.

The right-hand column shows the Vision, issues and ideas for Central Highfields that are linked to these Values.

CENTRAL HIGHFIELDS MASTER PLAN: SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION INPUT

Values	Vision/issues/ideas for Central Highfields that are linked to these Values
<p>BELONGING, FAMILY, COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURS</p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A strong sense of community and belonging – close knit; ▪ People know each other (know their neighbours) and have shared experiences and values; ▪ People look after one another; ▪ Inclusive, welcoming; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A place to live, work and play; ▪ Having places for people to connect and things to do outside of family home – entertainment, parks, shopping, sport, education, health and fitness; ▪ Easy links for community to connect – cul-de-sacs, bike and walking tracks; ▪ Family friendly/Family oriented- a place for families to grow up; and a place for extended families to gather; 	<p>Highfields is not just a place to live, but a great place to <u>live, work and play</u> with family and friends.</p> <p>Participants strongly favoured creation of a town square/village green/piazza – a focal area for people to gather every day as well as for special occasions. They were very keen to retain Highfields’ ‘village atmosphere’. They felt it very important that the centre of Highfields provides places for people to meet/connect; a family-friendly environment, usable by people of all ages/stages of life. Several participants were in favour of relocating the War Memorial to a place where the whole community can gather. Aesthetic appeal was important – the centre needs to be welcoming and inviting. Participants expressed a strong desire that the overall appearance remains green and open, with plenty of trees.</p> <p>There was also high support for facilities that enable community activity e.g. amphitheatre, community garden, children’s playground, café in the park, water play, ropes course, giant chess, men’s shed, expanded pool, recreation centre (not just sport), as well as dining and entertainment (cinema, theatre).</p> <p>Many participants saw the library as a crucial community hub, to include meeting spaces, teen ‘hangout’ or clubhouse; the importance of spaces for young people to ‘hang out’ was a recurring theme. Several participants commented that existing facilities (Cultural Centre etc) are too large/expensive for small community activities – suggesting a need for more modest/affordable places for community members and groups to gather (as now available at Toowoomba City Library, for example).</p> <p>Participants noted the need to include groups such as elderly and those with disability, ensuring they can also connect with community and access an active lifestyle. Integrated spaces were preferred – not separate areas for different cohorts. Participants generally also wanted to be inclusive and supportive of business and its interests, particularly local SMEs, and creating local job opportunities so people can work in their community (from after school jobs to long-term employment opportunities).</p> <p>A common preference was for e.g. local butchers, bakers, small and individual shops rather than more department stores (Kmart etc.), or ‘big box’ type stores in this area (e.g. Pet Barn, auto stores); also markets (in town square or at a school) – keen to support local family business and artisans from local community.</p> <p>Regarding neighbourhoods: there was recognition (sometimes reluctant) that housing diversity is needed to ensure people can stay in Highfields (e.g. downsizers), and to address diverse needs (e.g. singles, couples without children). There were very mixed views on whether more affordable housing is desirable – those who favour diversity vs those with nostalgic attachment to the earlier-style Highfields.</p>

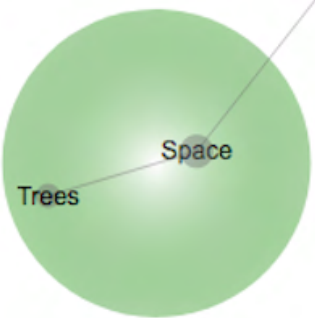
Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p data-bbox="114 220 528 260">DISTINCT IDENTITY</p>  <p data-bbox="454 347 663 375">Characterised by:</p> <ul data-bbox="465 384 739 986" style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being separate and independent from Toowoomba; ▪ Self-contained and convenient; ▪ A hinterland village atmosphere – that is different from Toowoomba; ▪ More relaxed and peaceful; ▪ Slower pace and smaller; ▪ More family friendly ▪ Greater connection to rural landscape ▪ More trees ▪ More open ▪ Smaller country feel – rural ▪ Quieter 	<p data-bbox="846 244 1960 271">Highfields has its own distinct identity, that is different to Toowoomba and any other place.</p> <p data-bbox="846 319 2107 453">Universally, participants had a very keen sense of Highfields’ distinct identity – particularly emphasising its separateness from Toowoomba, but also very keen that any new development would not be re-creating any other location but would remain distinctively ‘Highfields’. Workshop conversations featured many comparatives– ‘more this’ or ‘less that’ than Toowoomba.</p> <p data-bbox="846 494 2074 557">Participants recognised and valued this opportunity (Master Plan) to help create a well-designed centre that is consistent with Highfields’ distinctive character.</p> <p data-bbox="846 598 2128 734">Generally, there was a desire to do more in Highfields (recreation, shopping, dining, work), without needing to go into ‘town’ (Toowoomba). Participants were eager to be largely ‘independent’ – i.e. they aspire to access most of their day-to-day needs in Highfields. A few participants disagreed, preferring to keep Highfields as is and prepared to go to Toowoomba as needed.</p> <p data-bbox="846 775 2092 911">There was much discussion about what would and would not be ‘appropriate’ for Highfields, with firmly held and occasionally conflicting views. Visually, participants generally wanted the built form and overall design to remain ‘country’ – ‘we need to keep the village atmosphere’. In built form, people generally favoured timber, stone, glass, copper – not concrete – and always with trees. They spoke of ‘a mini CBD’.</p> <p data-bbox="846 952 2128 1230">Views on an appropriate building height ranged from single storey to 5+ storeys, with the most common perceptions being a combination of ‘no higher than the trees’ and 2-3 storeys. Keeping the higher buildings to the central part of the new development area was also a commonly held view; participants spoke of not wanting people looking into the back yards of others, and maintaining distance or green ‘buffer zones’ between higher buildings and existing residential areas. Participants spoke favourably of e.g. Southbank Brisbane, Hastings St (Noosa) and Armidale (NSW), but continued to reiterate that ‘it needs to look like Highfields, not like Southbank or Melbourne’. Boulevards of trees and ‘green spines’ were common themes – ‘a central area that blends with the natural environment’.</p> <p data-bbox="846 1272 2119 1407">There were strong views on what uses would and would not be consistent with Highfields’ identity, and a feeling for some that this identity would be compromised with more supermarkets, petrol stations, fast food outlets, a department store etc. Participants recognise an opportunity to create something innovative and again distinctive for Highfields, e.g. business incubator/hub.</p>

A related theme is the need to let tourists and potential tourists know what's great about Highfields – what to see and do. This requires a sense that you have now arrived at the town centre; signage on highway; memorable experiences and settings; an iconic structure ('our Opera House').

There was a commonly-held view that Highfields consists of quality housing with nice settings or outlooks, and people were keen to have 'buffers' between existing housing and any new developments.

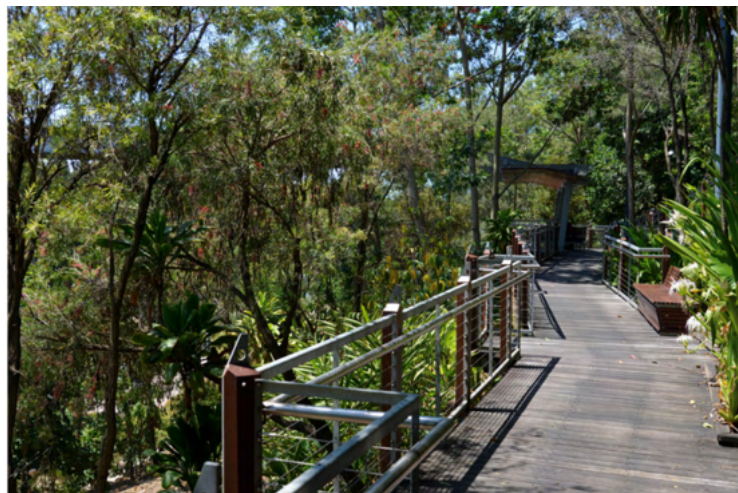


Wagga Wagga Library – images provided by a workshop participant; an example of public spaces that remain distinctive to a semi-rural setting

Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p>SPACE</p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highfields physical character being open, spacious and quiet; Green trees and green spaces open grassed areas and parks; Large blocks with big backyards, gardens; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Privacy – provided by space and low rise - no one able to see into your backyard; Clean air; Natural street scapes 	<p>Highfields residents highly value the space and openness of the area.</p> <p>Highfields residents' value about SPACE (characterised by the physical characteristics of being open, spacious, green and quiet) is strongly linked with all other values - making it almost a central theme or an over-arching value for the Central Highfields Master Plan.</p> <p>Participants generally recognised that Council made a good strategic decision in purchasing the 'new' land; that there is now a genuine opportunity for the community to shape how that land is used; and participants were keen to ensure the best possible use of this land. There is a strong sense of a 'once in a generation' opportunity to preserve some open space (like New York's Central Park etc), as well as to genuinely participate in shaping plans for other elements within their community nucleus.</p> <p>In envisioning Central Highfields in the future, the concept of space was characterised for participants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad support for a village green/piazza/civic square – a 'Highfields version' of an open public space that is still very green and connected to the surrounding environment. This could also entail a community garden or similar, underpinning the high value placed on environment/sustainability; Importance of the interface of public facilities with open areas – e.g. library connecting with cultural precinct/outdoor space, outdoor cinema; a parkland interfacing with cultural and recreational facilities, an amphitheatre (e.g. Jimbour House) – arrangements such as these facilitate community connection; Wide boulevard treatments for both existing and any new roads within the area and in particular for the newly realigned O'Brien Road; and an avenue of trees along Highfields Road (part of the Highfields 'entry statement'), again consistent with open space/green aesthetic; and A growing recognition that greater housing diversity is needed, and some tolerance for medium-high density residential (eg. townhouse development more than high rise) in the Central area (although views were mixed). <p>It is important to note that those who supported denser housing development generally did so on the proviso that a sense of space was maintained – a 'buffer' between existing houses and any new development - characterising access to open space and privacy as an entitlement of existing residents.</p>

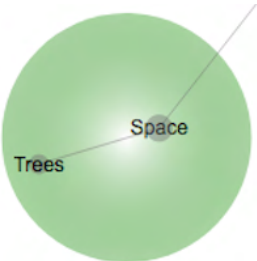
There was also some acknowledgement that multi-storey development helps to maximise open space (and also that multi-storey apartments with views would be prime real estate).

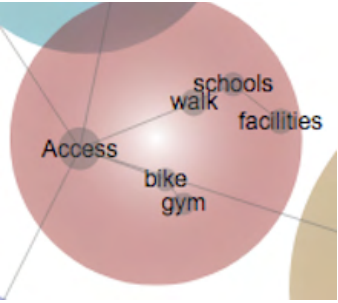
Examples provided (images below) include Gympie, 17 Mile Rocks (water park), Kwinana Adventure Park (WA), green space outside Toowoomba City Library, Crows Nest centre surrounding a park.



Images provided by Facebook group member and workshop participants



Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p>TREES AND NATURE</p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Green trees and a tall-timber feel; ▪ Large established trees; ▪ Wildlife (birds, koalas); ▪ Nature is close to homes; ▪ Complex vegetation; ▪ Natural corridors; ▪ Remnant vegetation; ▪ Habitat preservation; ▪ Old gums established trees; ▪ Sustainability of environment; ▪ Closely related to the concept of Space. 	<p>Established trees and the natural environment are highly valued by Highfields residents.</p> <p>The overarching vision for trees and nature was about maintaining a sense of greenery, the highly prized ‘tall timber feel’ of Highfields.</p> <p>On the ‘new land’ this included maintaining as many existing trees as possible, throughout the whole new area but in particular the corridor along Clarke Road. Many people saw this as a green wildlife corridor which connects Rogers Reserve with Klein Creek. While a few participants wanted to leave this strip untouched, the majority favoured making it more usable than the Rogers Reserve, e.g. with walking trail/board walk, signage, picnic tables, a treetop walk. Buderim, Peacehaven and Cooby Dam were cited as good examples of using this type of space.</p> <p>Council made a clear commitment at the commencement of this community engagement process that Charles & Motee Rogers Reserve, while included within the CHMP area, would continue as a protected reserve. Notwithstanding this, many residents were keen to discuss its future. Views about the Reserve were fairly evenly divided between ‘don’t touch it’ and ‘it’s scrubby, not very attractive and hardly used, so it should be cleaned up and made much more usable’. Some participants declared the Reserve needs ‘cleaning up’ because it presents a fire hazard; this view was not supported by QFRS. There were multiple comments on the Reserve’s educational value/potential – as an outdoor classroom.</p> <p>More broadly, there was strong interest in embracing the natural environment in any new development (Wagga Wagga Library was cited as an example.) Treed streets and boulevards were also considered to be a Highfields-appropriate design response. Underground power lines were also mentioned.</p> <p>There was wide support for increased walking trails generally, to take advantage of the natural environment – see also ‘Accessibility and Connectivity’.</p> <p>There was also some interest in sustainable developments e.g. solar, wind, water harvesting; recognising increasing power demands, and some discussion of environmentally-sensitive design principles.</p>

Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p>ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY</p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easy access to services and facilities using a range of modes – in particular walking access and bikes; ▪ Access for all ages and abilities; ▪ Connectivity to technology – internet; ▪ Public Transport; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic – cars; ▪ Parking; ▪ Walkability ; ▪ Cycling tracks and pathways; ▪ Connecting through easements and cul-de-sacs; ▪ Safe places to connect. 	<p>Planning needs to ensure that the Central Highfields of the future will be easy to get around and will offer a comprehensive range of facilities and services.</p> <p><u>Ease of access and movement around Central Highfields</u></p> <p>Participants were keen to plan for ease (and safety) of movement around the centre – walking and otherwise. Ideas included wide footpaths, shady places to stop and sit, a boulevard treatment for O’Brien Road. Some suggested a mall with no vehicles, with deliveries made to the rear of shops/businesses. There were many comments regarding the current lack of footpaths.</p> <p>Generally, participants were keen for people to dominate over vehicles, e.g. Lisbon – a wide pedestrian area with cafes etc, with multiple lanes of traffic either side. Participants noted the need for accessibility for all, including the elderly, those with limited mobility, parents with prams. ‘It needs to be easy to get to the places where we connect’.</p> <p>There was high interest in active transport – walking and cycling, including for young people. Noted that any new paths need to link with existing paths – and be wide enough to serve a dual purpose –eg. walking and cycling (at least 1500mm). Participants were keen to explore potential for bike paths to be separate from roads where feasible. They were also interested in potential for trails further afield, e.g. to Cooby Dam, Pioneer Village, Creek, Kratze Rd ovals, Peacehaven, possibly young people from Crows Nest, Meringandan getting to Highfields.</p> <p><u>ICT</u></p> <p>There were many comments about improving internet access, and having open public spaces with WiFi available, especially for young people. The library was viewed as an opportunity for best practice in smart technology. The importance of high speed internet for future business growth was also noted.</p> <p><u>Transport hub</u></p> <p>There were quite a few comments about the need for a transport interchange/hub: the Secondary College favours a location not at the school; possibly where current fire station is? Participants spoke of the need for a Park & Ride to Toowoomba (cars & bikes), plus local public transport; also consider tourist coaches.</p> <p><u>Access to services and facilities</u></p> <p>Many participants had views on what uses would and would not be appropriate for a future Central Highfields. Some examples include IT hub, low cost office space, recording studio; no more supermarkets</p>

In workshops and on Facebook, there was a strong preference for the first image over the second one.



or fast food, 'do we need more shops when we have vacant shops now?' There was considerable support for reviewing the library location now that the new land is available.

Other comments included existing facilities being highly-utilised with the growing population – need for expansion, e.g. indoor sports areas (lack of opportunity for new groups due to high utilisation now), pool (50m pool could be shared between schools and wider community); more public toilets.

There was considerable discussion about future access to services not currently available in Highfields, e.g. allied health (physiotherapy, podiatry etc.), medical (including pathology, Xray), TAFE or University sub-campus (possibly related to military), theatre, tourist info centre, public gym/fitness equipment, social services (government). Several participants noted the need to set land aside for a future hospital.

Roads and traffic

A selection of comments about roads provides an overview of this popular topic:


O'Brien Road realignment: strong support for progressing realignment as soon as possible – and especially traffic signals for children crossing Highfields Road as a top priority. Participants noted the potential for O'Brien Rd to 'split' the centre, and recognised the need to address this. People will need to cross safely; traffic calming measures were discussed (e.g. speed bumps, tactile indicators), as well as an underground tunnel or a pedestrian overpass. Participants suggested variations on the proposed realignment, including realigning for the full length through to Clarke Rd. Many of the concepts workshopped involved extending Balmoral St to O'Brien Rd and making it wider.

Participants generally acknowledged that O'Brien Road will remain a thoroughfare, and that this will be a challenge given that it runs right through the Central Highfields area. While there was some support for traffic slowing on O'Brien Road through the central precinct, others saw a need to keep speed levels higher (60km) and have pedestrian access underneath or overhead. Others still, envisioned another (perhaps) parallel road to take traffic away from O'Brien Road so that it could be maintained as a pedestrian friendly strip with a village feel.

Other road considerations/suggestions: Ensuring access to the cultural precinct for buses and limousines. Suggestions for a new road along the eastern side of the new land (adjacent to Clarke Road) with a tree corridor to buffer existing houses. Any new streets within new land to be pedestrian - and cycle-friendly. Widening Highfields Rd (using some of new land) and make sure other roads can take some of non-centre traffic.

There was a common concern for traffic flow generally as the population grows – Highfields Road is already considered to be 'chaos' at peak times and needing attention. Participants recognised the need for strategic thinking now about how traffic will flow through Central Highfields in the future.

	<p><i>Beyond scope:</i> Widen Reis Road to make it a more viable alternative to Highfields Road; alternative road to Toowoomba (Old Goombungee) to ease congestion, also improve access for Meringandan residents.</p> <p><u>Parking</u></p> <p>Participants generally expressed a desire for any new parking to be discreet. Participants explored various solutions, e.g. nose-in parking along a treed edge on Clarke Road ('parking in among the trees'), parking behind shops and underground parking. Those who were less intent on 'hidden' parking also discussed e.g. parking along sides of wide boulevard, centre strip like Toowoomba CBD, or multi-storey (but generally ugly as well as expensive). There was a clear preference for 'scattering' parking around the area rather than having one big, ugly car park; landscaping was also mentioned as important. Caravan and trailer (including trades people) parking is another aspect that was noted as needing to be considered. A number of participants felt there is already a shortage of parking, especially at peak times.</p>
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Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p>SAFETY AND SECURITY</p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being a safe and secure place to live, work and play, low crime; ▪ Safe for children to ride bikes and cross roads; ▪ Safe to move around for all ages; ▪ Safe for walkers/cyclists; ▪ Safe to be outside; ▪ Lighting and security. 	<p>Highfields is a community where people feel safe and secure.</p> <p>Many participants noted the urgency about the safety of crossing Highfields Road near Mary MacKillop School – this was a repeated concern.</p> <p>Participants frequently noted that pedestrian safety is paramount – and currently of considerable concern. School students accessing the central area from both secondary schools was a particular safety concern. Participants commented on the need for dedicated walkways and more footpaths, noting that pedestrian crossings need to be conveniently located – 'people will cross wherever it's most convenient, especially teenagers'. An overpass or underpass to traverse O'Brien Road came up in many discussions.</p> <p>Participants reiterated that the central area needs to be easily and safely accessible for children, both those travelling on foot and those riding bikes.</p> <p>Other discussions in relation to safety included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting for security; a safe place for young people to hang out; police presence. • Protection from the elements – sun, wind, rain. • Need to plan for safety for major community events – ease of access for emergency services etc. <p>Relocation and co-location of emergency services was suggested by a number of participants; this was not supported by emergency services personnel when consulted.</p>

Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p>ECONOMY AND GROWTH</p> <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A desire to live, WORK and play in Highfields; ▪ A recognition of the need for a stronger commercial focus to attract investment and jobs; ▪ A passionate small business community; ▪ A strong desire to support and encourage local business development; ▪ A desire to foster Highfields' distinct identity through economic growth <p>Note: Economic Growth did not appear on its own on the electronically generated maps (in Leximancer), however, the concept of Work appeared in strong connection to Belonging and Family. On further analysis of the vision data strong themes emerged about the importance of growing a strong local economy in Highfields to support jobs growth and the needs of a growing population.</p>	<p>The future development of Highfields is underpinned by a diverse and growing economy.</p> <p>Participants recognised the importance of growth that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. While a small number of participants would prefer no growth, most recognised that growth is inevitable, and appreciated this opportunity to be involved in planning for it. There was a strong sense that future growth needs to maintain and enhance Highfields' distinct identity.</p> <p>There were multiple comments about the need for more commercial/office space, including space for business start-ups, and for local artisans. There is a commonly held desire to support and encourage local businesspeople, e.g. local boutiques rather than chain stores. Participants noted that there are many home-based businesses in Highfields.</p> <p>Technology/innovation was a repeated theme, with a desire to build knowledge economy based jobs. Suggestions included a technology park, animation studio and a recording studio. This sector was also recognised as a likely source of future jobs. It was noted that communications/IT infrastructure is critical to creating and attracting new jobs - high-speed internet is essential, especially if Highfields is to develop a focus on 'tech' industries.</p> <p>Tourism was identified as another area for growth – there is a desire to make Highfields a 'weekend destination'; a bus interchange including for tourist coaches would assist with this.</p> <p>A mix of use to support job creation and economic development in Central Highfields is considered desirable – offices, knowledge based economy jobs, space for professionals, higher density retail, cafes, restaurants and entertainment.</p> <p>Some measures to help underpin good outcomes that were discussed: engaging a professional 'placemaker', planning covenants, an 'anchor tenant' to stimulate new development; importance of aesthetics in blending commercial/retail/residential – e.g. Southbank. Businesses also need easy access/parking, services.</p> <p>Some input regarding planning for future growth: land for a hospital; water, sewerage and drainage infrastructure; an alternate route to Toowoomba; location and expansion of emergency services; need for the Master Plan to 'future-proof' Highfields – not just address current needs; flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities; charge points for electric cars in near future/provide for solar cars.</p>

What's next?

The illustration below depicts the timeline for development of the Central Highfields Master Plan.

Council will now develop options based on Stage 1 Engagement, and these will be presented back to the community during Stage 2 Engagement in February-March 2018. Participants in Stage 1 were given an opportunity to indicate whether they would like to continue their involvement during Stage 2.

In addition, the Facebook group established for Stage 1 has been kept open; while it will not be regularly monitored by the Project Team until Stage 2, it has been kept open as a forum for Highfields residents and other interested stakeholders to continue to share ideas and views.

Interested stakeholders can also stay up to date via Council's 'Your Say' website <http://yoursay.tr.qld.gov.au/HTC>

