

33 Saxon St Redevelopment: Supporting Excellence in Community Engagement

STAGE ONE SUMMARY REPORT

September 2021



We proudly acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the owners of the lands on which this project is to be delivered, and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise the deep connection of First Peoples to Country and value their contribution to caring for, and managing the land, water, natural and built landscapes and their profound knowledge systems.

We are committed to pursuing genuine and lasting partnerships with First Peoples to learn about and understand their culture and connections to Country in the way we plan for, and manage, the delivery of all projects.

We also extend our acknowledgement to all First Peoples and Torres Strait Islander communities and their rich culture, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

BACKGROUND

33 Saxon Street is a well known and much-loved community and creative space in the heart of Brunswick, and part of the Civic and Cultural Precinct and the Brunswick Design District.

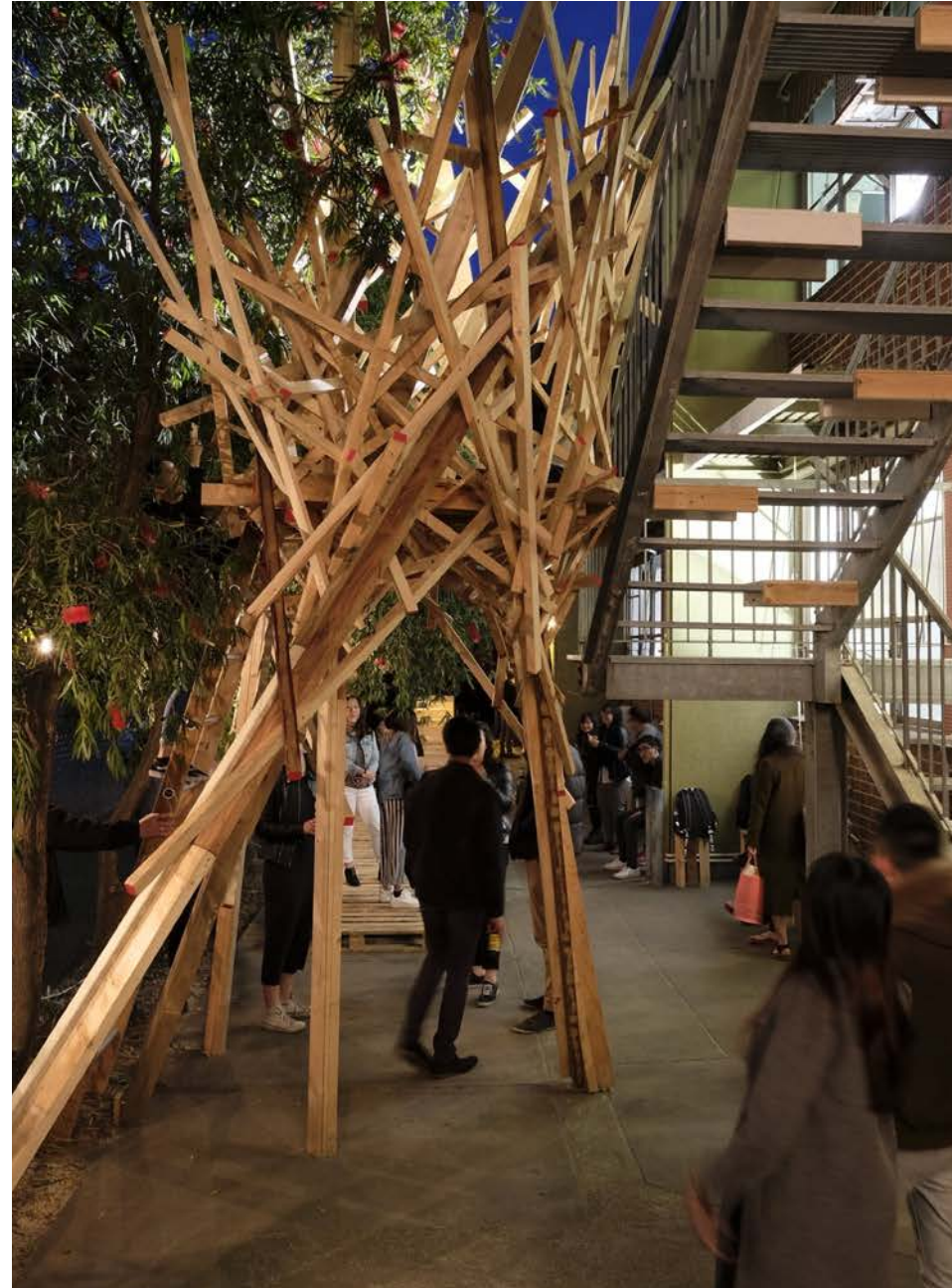
33 Saxon Street is moving towards an exciting future with a redevelopment for a landmark project which aims to be a socially inclusive community and creative hub.

The redevelopment builds on previous work undertaken in developing Moreland City Council's Strategic Framework (2017) and extensive community engagement on future of the site (2018).

Consultation with the local community in 2018 was critical in establishing a concept for the redevelopment. This concept was refined in 2020 in the light of impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a design team led by Kennedy Nolan was appointed in early 2021 to lead the redevelopment

It is intended that the redeveloped site will contain:

- A large public open space to host outdoor events, community recreation and creative activities.
- The potential for a brand-new home for Brunswick Neighbourhood House.
- A new community-use facility that will house occasional childcare, Maternal and Child Health facilities, multipurpose community rooms and commercial office space.
- Creative production spaces and a gallery exhibition space that will be available for artists and creative organisations to lease with subsidised rent.
- Space for a commercial cafe or hospitality business.
- Improved connection and access between the site and Brunswick Baths



BACKGROUND

Moreland City Council have engaged Greenshoot Consulting to provide community engagement support to inform the design of the redevelopment of the site. The community engagement activities aim to support the design of a variety of community and creative spaces, including open public space.

Greenshoot Consulting understands the future success of the site is predicated on establishing a strong sense of joint purpose and ownership within the community.

Greenshoot Consulting has conducted a series of community engagement activities as part of Stage One of the redevelopment.

Stage One of these activities involved Stakeholder Workshops and collation and analysis of community feedback provided via the Conversations Moreland Community Survey.

This Report provides a summary of the key findings stemming from these Stage One engagement activities and maps stakeholder and community feedback to four key areas – Historical Narratives, Current Uses, User Experience and Future Uses.



Stakeholder Workshops

Two workshops were delivered for key stakeholder groups - representatives from Brunswick Design District and Current Site Users.



Workshop Participants

Overall, 43 stakeholders participated in workshops across the two stakeholder groups - Brunswick Design District (6) and Current Site Users (37)



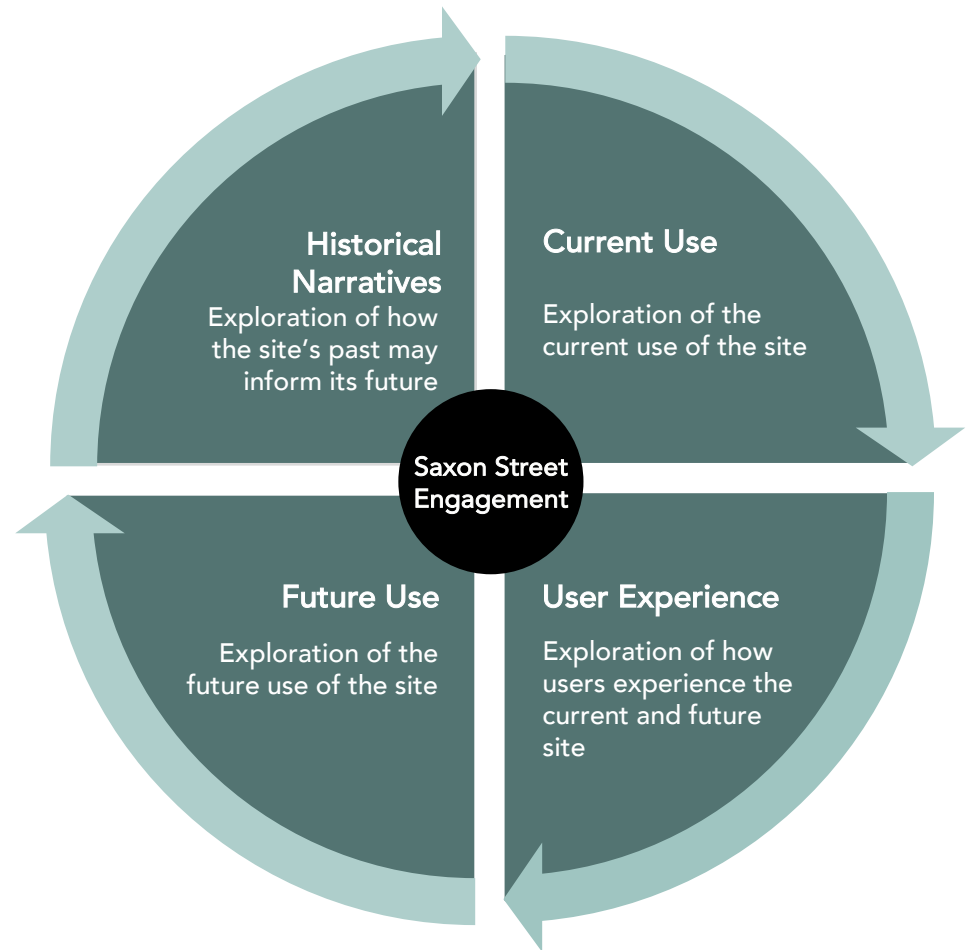
Survey Responses

A community survey was also hosted via the Conversations Moreland site and attracted 139 individual responses.



KEY AREAS OF ENQUIRY

The following structure was used for seeking input from stakeholders and community members as part of our engagement activities to inform the design of the redevelopment of 33 Saxon St.



KEY TAKEAWAYS: HISTORICAL NARRATIVES



AMPLIFY THE INDUSTRIAL AND MULTICULTURAL NATURE OF BRUNSWICK

It is important to **recognise and respect the industrial and multicultural history** of Brunswick and the site and these characteristics should be reflected in and influence the design of the redevelopment. This **includes retaining elements of the historic buildings** on site and the site's overall industrial feel.



THE SITE AS PLACE OF EDUCATION

The site has had a **long association as a place of education** and the presence of **the former school should be acknowledged**, both through stories of past students and by acknowledging some difficult truths about its history.



AMPLIFY CONNECTION TO THE SITE'S FIRST PEOPLES

Opportunities to **celebrate and amplify the history and culture of First Peoples** on site was seen as very important and should be demonstrated as part of the redevelopment.



RETAIN THE INFORMAL + INCLUSIVE NATURE OF THE SITE

The current site's **informal nature and inclusive management style** was seen as a critical elements of the overall character of the site and the redevelopment should try to emulate this approach and create a space which **encourages community building, connection and experimentation**.

"It's important to reflect the industrial history of the site and the historical industries it supported that shaped Brunswick's development"

"Saxon Street has been a great platform for students, and we don't want to lose that by making it too slick. The site should not inhibit risk taking and experimentation for its users"

KEY TAKEAWAYS: CURRENT USE



OPEN GREEN SPACE

The provision of **open green space** is deemed **critical**, particularly in the local area, as is the presence of **large trees and a green canopy**. The current outdoor spaces including **the outdoor seating, performance and informal gathering areas** are also important, and should be allowed for and enhanced within the redevelopment.



DIVERSE, FLEXIBLE AND INFORMAL SPACES

The **diversity, flexibility and informality** of the spaces is a critical part of the success of the current site and supports a range of creative pursuits. Spaces which **support creatives at all stages of their careers**, from encouraging experimenting and risk taking to more professional spaces which **enable established practitioners, opportunities to showcase work** are also important.



LIGHT, OPEN + PERMEABLE SPACE

The **light and open nature** of the current internal spaces, and the greening of the corridors was deemed an important element of both the functionality and feel of the current spaces. The ability to **see activity within other spaces** was also considered a positive, although it is recognised that some **spaces also need to be private**.



SPACE WHICH PROMOTES CONNECTION + COLLABORATION

Informal spaces which provide opportunities for **gathering and shared hospitality** spaces are important in supporting community building and encouraging incidental meetings and connections.



AFFORDABLE + ACCESSIBLE SPACE

Affordable and accessible space for local creatives, which is **managed by creatives who are supportive of and understand the needs of creative practice** is important, as is the role that BlakDot Gallery plays in activating the site.

"There is variety and flexibility in the spaces, they're interesting and don't feel corporate. They have personality"

KEY TAKEAWAYS: USER EXPERIENCE (CURRENT)



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY + BELONGING

The current nature of the site and its management style **provide a sense of connection and belonging** that is important to creatives and all users of the site. This is enhanced by the **informal nature of the spaces**, the **active programming** and the **current management's deep understanding of the needs of the local creative community**. This sense of community plays an important role in allowing for peer-to-peer learning and creative collaborations.



INSPIRATIONAL + AESTHETICALLY PLEASING SPACES

The current site's **industrial and heritage architecture and re-adaptive use** aligns with both the creatives and creative pursuits that it supports. **Current users find the spaces inspirational**, and this contributes to the overall sense of creativity that is felt across the site.



A PEACEFUL OASIS

The site's current **green and open spaces** provide a **sense of peacefulness and retreat** which is important to current users. **The large trees and open lawn areas are critical** in establishing the sense of an 'oasis' from the busy commercial activity of Sydney Rd and the surrounding area.



FREEDOM + EXPERIMENTATION

The site has a **sense of playfulness and activity** which encourages curiosity and is critical to establishing the overall user experience of the site. This is enhanced by both the **diversity of internal and external spaces** as well as the informal nature of these spaces.

"The space should feel artistic, with natural light, art displays and evidence of making."

KEY TAKEAWAYS: USER EXPERIENCE (FUTURE)



A WELCOMING, SAFE COMMUNITY SITE

The future site should **feel safe and welcoming** and have a strong **sense of connection to the surrounding community** through supporting a range of programs and activations, provision of **Informal community gathering spaces** and open green spaces. Public safety should be considered as part of the design including provision of lighting and night-time activations.



A SENSE OF DISCOVERY, INTIMACY, TRANQUILITY AND PLAY

The site should promote a **sense of discovery and intimacy** and provide spaces which are green, open and peaceful. Outdoor spaces should also be vibrant and colourful and engaging for a wide range of community members.



A SITE WHICH SUPPORTS COLLABORATION AND CREATIVE GROWTH

The site should **support practitioners at all levels of their career** and continue to **encourage collaboration** between creatives and creative practitioners. It is important the site retains the **freedom to experiment** and **extend creative practice**.



A SENSE OF CONNECTION TO PEOPLE + PLACE

The site's current **sense of community and belonging** make it a unique experience and this should continue as part of the redeveloped site. The **urban and industrial feel** should be reflected in the design and history of the site honoured as part of making the redeveloped site feel **quintessentially Brunswick**. The ongoing **support for, and visibility of, a range of creatives and creative practices** also strongly connects the site to place and people.

"The space should support a sense of safety, especially at night time. The design needs to consider safety in all aspects, including cultural safety"

KEY TAKEAWAYS: FUTURE USE



A VISION WHICH SUPPORTS THE LOCAL CREATIVE COMMUNITY

The vision for the redevelopment of 33 Saxon St provides an integrated response to Brunswick's broader creative community and will support a diversity of creative activities by providing open and flexible spaces as well as and affordable spaces for creatives. The vision also allows for the provision of accessible spaces for both community and creatives.



GREEN + ECOFRIENDLY SPACES

The provision of green spaces is seen as a critical part of the redevelopment, as well as implementing a range of eco-friendly practices such as community composting, recycling, the use of renewable energy and water capture and recycling facilities. Increasing the number of trees and green canopy was also considered important.



ENHANCED ACCESS + INCLUSIVITY

The future site should support improved accessibility and inclusivity to broaden the site's user-base. Internal and external spaces should be designed to enhance accessibility and inclusivity and there is an opportunity to improve the site's relationship to the street and blur the boundaries with the public realm.



IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

The redevelopment creates the opportunity to provide improved infrastructure to supports a diversity of community and creative activities. Enhanced capacity to support performances (both indoor and outdoors), community events such as markets, film screenings and live music are important to consider as part of the redevelopment. Retaining and improving community infrastructure is also considered important, particularly meeting rooms and the community garden, as well as communal kitchen facilities.



DAY + NIGHT TIME ACTIVATION

There is a strong desire to use green space within the site both during the day and at night, as well as to attend a range of programs and events, including live music and performances. Providing opportunities and infrastructure for the public to gather with friends and a range of hospitality offerings is also considered important.

"Saxon Street will be a place where you go to work out where you fit in the creative ecosystem of Brunswick, acting as a cultural gateway"



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