

Why is the Blackbutt Village area on Orchardtown Road being upgraded?

In 2016 we audited all of the Local Centres within Newcastle LGA. Through this process Orchardtown Road was prioritised for infrastructure renewal.

We undertook an online survey of the local community in 2017. Over 200 people responded and the community's top three ranked priorities for improvement were:

1. Pedestrian safety, access and connectivity (36%)
2. Traffic safety (25%)
3. Aesthetics (look and feel of the area) (17%)

We also undertook a Personal Experience Survey in June 2019 with 50 people onsite. Results from this survey highlighted a lack of public art and spaces for people to gather, and a lack of opportunities for activation by the community and businesses in the area.

What is the area being upgraded?

The plan covers public land including streets and public open spaces within and neighbouring Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road New Lambton, which is zoned B1 local centre in the Newcastle Local Environment Plan (LEP) 2012.

The objective of B1 zoning for Neighbourhood Centres is to provide a range of small-scale retail, business and community uses that serve the needs of people who live or work in the surrounding neighbourhood. For more information on B1 zoning and our Local Environment Plan visit <https://newcastle.nsw.gov.au/development/land-use-planning/local-environmental-plans-lep>

City of Newcastle cannot make improvements to privately owned land, although it can make recommendations and work with owners, particularly when land is redeveloped.

How has City of Newcastle engaged with the community so far?

Based on insights gathered from the 2017 survey and 2019 personal experience survey mentioned above we prepared the draft Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road Public Domain and Traffic Plan which was on public exhibition for community comment from 2 March until 23 April 2020.

Due to COVID-19 a community workshop planned for 28 March 2020 had to be cancelled. In lieu of this we provided an additional questionnaire to registered workshop attendees and extended the exhibition period to 23 April.

Following the public exhibition, we finalised the Public Domain Plan in line with community submissions. The [final Public Domain Plan](#) was adopted by the elected Council on 22 September 2020.

We recently sought feedback from local businesses, and then we ran an online survey to gather community feedback on a range of options for the structure of timed (not paid) parking in the area. The survey closed on 1 August 2022, and we will share outcomes from this following review of the feedback.

What further consultation is planned?

We'll also seek feedback on placemaking for the two public open spaces proposed – one outside the Blackbutt Hotel and one adjacent Myra Street. Our placemaking activities will invite locals to get involved in the creation and ongoing care of a communal outdoor space that is unique and represents the local community.

What are the main features of the design?

- A new 40km/hr zone to improve safety.
- An off-road shared pedestrian and cycle path which forms an integral part of the broader Newcastle cycle network.
- A new pedestrian crossing and new footpath connections to Blackbutt Reserve and Richley Reserve.
- Wider footpaths and new plazas to improve outdoor dining and promote activation of the centre.
- Renewal of drainage, kerb, gutter, road, footpaths, lighting and street furniture.
- Tree planting and landscaping.

How will the upgrade make the area safer?

- We will remove the risk caused by vehicles manoeuvring into parking spaces in a busy traffic environment and drivers opening doors onto cyclists by relocating existing parallel parking from the busy Main Through road onto the quieter Eastern One Way Aisle and Western Side Road.
- We will slow drivers down by removing parking lanes to narrow the Main Through Road and by lining it with an avenue of trees.
- We will make it safer for pedestrians to enter and exit parked vehicles with 90 degree and parallel parking on the quieter Eastern One Way Aisle and Western Side Road. New parking will be designed to Australian Standards for safety.
- We will move the Eastern One Way aisle exit northward away from the intersection of Carnley Avenue and Orchardtown Road.
- We will deliver a shared pedestrian and cycle path (shared path) on the western side of Orchardtown Road forming part of an important connection between Blackbutt Reserve and Kotara Train Station. To remove a vehicle conflict point from the shared path we will close the intersection of Dunkley Avenue and Orchardtown Road.
- We will work with the state government department of Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to improve safety at the intersection of Carnley Avenue and Orchardtown Road through an upgrade of the traffic signals.

In addition to these traffic changes, lighting will be provided to an appropriate standard, including lighting for the proposed pedestrian crossing, pedestrian refuge and bus stops. Two disabled parking spaces designed to current Australian Standards will be provided close to shops and the taxi rank will be moved to an accessible location on Carnley Avenue outside Blackbutt Hotel. Parking will be safer to access, and better connected to the shops. Parking turnover will be encouraged with timed (not paid) parking.

How will the upgrade impact parking?

- We undertook a parking survey in May 2019 which indicated that the minimum number of vacant parking spaces available in a day is around 25 spaces. So at other times of the day, more than 25 vacant spaces were available.
- The May 2019 survey identified that all day parking (minimum 8 hrs stay) by commuters or workers typically occupied 28 parking spaces – 21 in the Western Side Road and 7 in the Main Through Road (western side).
- The safety and public domain improvements planned in our upgrade will remove parking spaces, however this loss of parking can be managed by the introduction of timed (not paid) parking to free up the spaces currently used as all-day parking for shoppers and visitors to businesses.
- Parking turnover will be encouraged with timed (not paid) parking. With the increased turnover of spaces (from the introduction of timed parking) parking availability for shoppers and visitors to businesses will be maintained.
- We will make it safer for people to get in and out of parked vehicles by locating 90 degree and parallel parking on the quieter side roads and by designing the new parking to meet Australian Standards for safety.
- Parking on the western side of Orchardtown Road will be safely connected to the shops with a pedestrian crossing.

How will the upgrade benefit businesses?

By creating safer connections to a larger range of timed parking spaces, visitors to businesses will have more parking options.

Shoppers arriving on foot or by bike will have safer entry to the shopping village, and cyclists will have bike racks for storing bikes.

The creation of an attractive pedestrian and cycle friendly precinct with outdoor plaza spaces will drive increased visitation and encourage people to stay for longer. Studies have shown a strong connection between increased foot traffic and increased business takings.

How will the centre look and feel different after the upgrade?

New elements will interpret the unique character of Blackbutt Village and celebrate its connection with Blackbutt Reserve. We will renew infrastructure including footpaths, roads, lighting, drainage and street furniture.

New trees, landscaping and communal design elements such as art and seating will be provided as part of a community placemaking process. We will retain existing trees where possible, to maintain the existing green backdrop to the commercial area. Any trees that are removed will be replaced and the overall layout offers a net increase in trees.

We will plant new trees within the widened footpath along the shop frontage to provide shade and greenery to pedestrians, and a pleasant environment for outdoor trading.

An avenue of trees is proposed along the Main Through Road providing shade to parked cars and the proposed shared pedestrian and cycle path. The avenue will also help to slow through traffic.

Trees within the 90-degree parking area on the Western Side Road will provide shade and greenery to parked cars and the proposed shared pedestrian and cycle path.

Overall there is an increase in landscaping and greenery compared with the existing layout, which will improve the look and feel of the area, and reduce heat in summer (the urban heat island effect).

The 2019 survey highlighted a lack of spaces for people to gather. How is this being improved?

Two small public open spaces are proposed – one located outside Blackbutt Hotel and one adjacent Myra Street – these function as pedestrian entries to the row of shops, and also as gathering places where small scale activation can occur.

New trees, landscaping and communal design elements such as art and seating will be provided as part of an ongoing community Placemaking process.

Placemaking is a collaborative design process that invites people to get involved in the creation and ongoing care of a communal outdoor space. As part of the process people share their ideas on how to provide for the needs of their community, and how to celebrate the character and heritage of their local area. This results in the creation of unique and special places where the community can meet and enjoy spending time.

Proposed footpath widening outside the shops will allow more outdoor trading to take place.

How will the upgrade improve connections to Blackbutt Reserve?

- A footpath connection to Carnley Avenue Reserve within Blackbutt Reserve will be provided on the northern side of Dunkley Avenue.
- A footpath connection to Richley Reserve within Blackbutt Reserve will be provided on the southern side of Freyberg Street.
- A shared pedestrian and cycle path (shared path) is proposed for the western side of Orchardtown Road forming part of an important connection between Blackbutt Reserve and Kotara Train Station.
- Upgraded wayfinding signage will be provided to guide visitors between Blackbutt Village and Blackbutt Reserve. The design of Blackbutt Village will reflect its connection with Blackbutt Reserve

How does the upgrade improve safety and access for cyclists?

A shared pedestrian and cycle path is proposed for the western side of Orchardtown Road forming part of a cycle route connection between Blackbutt Reserve and Kotara Train Station. It forms an integral part of the broader Newcastle cycle network and the requirement for this off-road facility was identified in the Grinsell Street to Rydal Street cycle route study June 2017.

A 40km/hr High Pedestrian Activity Area (HPAA) with associated traffic calming devices on Orchardtown Road between Freyberg Street and Carnley Avenue will create a safer environment for cyclists.

We will remove the risk caused by vehicles manoeuvring into parking spaces in a busy traffic environment and drivers opening doors onto cyclists by relocating existing parallel parking from the busy Main Through road onto the quieter Eastern One Way Aisle and Western Side Road.

When is the upgrade being delivered?

Construction commenced in March 2022, it will be delivered in stages and is anticipated to take 20 months.

What are the construction stages?

Construction commenced in March 2022 on the residential side streets of Freyberg Street and Dunkley Avenue. Works to upgrade drainage and parking spaces in the western side of Orchardtown Road have now commenced.

Works will then move from the eastern side of Orchardtown Road, to the main through road and intersection with Carnley Avenue.

The community and local businesses will be provided information on construction sequence and timing as the project progresses.

What is the current status?

Works on our upgrade commenced in March 2022, beginning with construction of new footpaths and the planting of new street trees on Freyberg Street and then Dunkley Avenue.

Upgrades to drainage and parking spaces in the western car park have also commenced. Several trees in Freyberg Street, Dunkley Ave and the western car park have been removed due to poor condition, with additional trees and garden beds being installed to improve the natural environment and increase shade.

In late 2022 we will engage with the community on design options for new public plaza spaces through a placemaking process. Placemaking is a collaborative design process that invites people to get involved in the creation and ongoing care of a communal outdoor space. As part of the process people share their ideas on how to provide for the needs of their community, and how to celebrate the character and heritage of their local area. This results in the creation of unique and special places where the community can meet and enjoy spending time.