

WATSON

Neighbourhood Plan

A sustainable future for Watson



ACT Government



building our city
building our community

ACT Government



ACT Planning &
Land Authority

WATSON

Neighbourhood Plan



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Prepared by the
ACT Planning and Land Authority



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What this Plan aims to achieve

The Watson Neighbourhood Plan guides this established garden suburb as it meets the challenges of both contemporary life and those that are predicted to arise over the next fifteen years. The Plan outlines the future character of the neighbourhood whilst protecting and enhancing the features currently valued. This Neighbourhood Plan provides planning strategies for the future of the local shopping centre, open spaces, residential areas, community facilities and transport networks (roads, footpaths etc).

The strategies documented in this Neighbourhood Plan and illustrated in the accompanying drawings must be read in conjunction with the Territory Plan and any other relevant ACT Government standards, policies and guidelines. No part of this Neighbourhood Plan overrides the Territory Plan. Where relevant, policies to implement strategies in this Neighbourhood Plan will be proposed for incorporation in the Territory Plan through the draft Variation process.

Who this Plan is for

The Plan is particularly relevant if you are:

- An existing Watson resident or considering being a Watson resident;
- A Watson business owner or tenant;
- An investor or investor's agent (for example an architect) interested in Watson;
- An ACT Planning and Land Authority officer responsible for the assessment of development applications in Watson and surrounding suburbs; or
- A provider and/or user of the neighbourhood's community facilities and services.

How this Plan was developed

The development of the Watson Neighbourhood Plan, along with that of the Downer and Hackett Neighbourhood Plans, commenced in March 2003 and has been a collaborative exercise. Participation was invited from all those who live, work, learn, play and invest in the suburb. The following key events held for all three suburbs have been important steps in the production of the Neighbourhood Plans:

- A neighbourhood survey letterboxed to all residents;
- School-based collaborations with childcare groups, preschool P&Cs and a survey of Majura Primary School students;
- A Neighbourhood Character Discovery (residents using disposable cameras to tell the ACT Planning and Land Authority about what is valued);
- Discussions with locally based key stakeholders including residents associations;

- Discussions with professional groups, such as the Planning Institute of Australia;
- Discussions with commercial lessees and industry groups such as the Master Builders Association, Housing Industry Association, Real Estate Institute, and the Property Council of Australia (ACT);
- Major Open-forum Visions Workshop attended by 220 participants;
- Focus Groups with community, business organisations and ACT Government agencies;
- Four-day Design Charette, including two community sessions providing a limited opportunity for participation by neighbourhood representatives;
- Public exhibition of Design Charette's Ideas Plan;
- The establishment of a Residents Reference Group (comprising members of resident/community Associations and other residents);
- Information sessions explaining the work-in-progress versions of the preliminary draft Neighbourhood Plans; and a
- Six-week formal public comment period.

The ACT Planning and Land Authority, through its Neighbourhood Planning Team, thanks all those who participated. We particularly acknowledge the inputs of the Residents Reference Group for Watson, Downer and Hackett.

The ACT Planning and Land Authority appreciates the involvement of the Independent Charette Design Team. The Design Team, an external group comprising extensive experience in urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, retail planning, transport planning and cultural planning, worked intensively over four days developing ideas for community discussion and debate. The resultant 'ideas plan' was one step in the Neighbourhood Planning process for Watson, Downer and Hackett and the plan itself does not have any status as a planning tool.

We also wish to thank the staff of the various ACT Government agencies that have participated in the program, including the Department of Urban Services, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, Department of Education and Training, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, ACT Health, the Chief Minister's Department, and Department of Justice and Community Safety.

As this Neighbourhood Plan aims to strike a balance between the diversity of values and aspirations that exist in the neighbourhood it will inevitably not be consistent with all ideas for the future. However, in the spirit of transparency, the ACT Planning and Land Authority undertakes to inform both the Minister for Planning and the community where this Plan differs from broad public opinion.

Unless otherwise noted, participants in the Watson Neighbourhood Character Study took all photographs appearing in this document.

ACT Planning and Land Authority
September 2004

The Watson Neighbourhood Plan at a glance

The Neighbourhood Vision

Watson in the future will be a neighbourhood that respects its Inner North location whilst striving to be a model of healthy, liveable, and sustainable living for a diverse range of people. The neighbourhood's Urban Open Spaces will not only be conserved but also enhanced, and the Local Centre will be a thriving community and commercial heart serving both the local and surrounding communities.

Key strategies for achieving the vision

Watson Local Centre:

- Support and enhance the community and commercial life of the Watson Local Centre in order to continue to offer convenient local shopping and popular meeting places for the Watson neighbourhood as well as adjacent neighbourhoods.

Residential Areas:

- Promote high-quality residential development that is sympathetic and appropriate to the existing garden suburb neighbourhood character in terms of scale, form and landscape setting.
- Provide a diversity of housing choice for singles, couples and families of different sizes and ages in appropriate locations.

Urban Open Space:

- Redevelopment will not encroach on areas designated as Urban Open Space under the Territory Plan.

Community Facilities:

- Retain the integrity of land defined under the Territory Plan as Community Facility.

Movement Networks:

- Provide a diversity of accessible transport options.

B Watson Now

Note: unless otherwise stated, all statistical information contained in this section is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics – Censuses of Population and Housing.

The Place

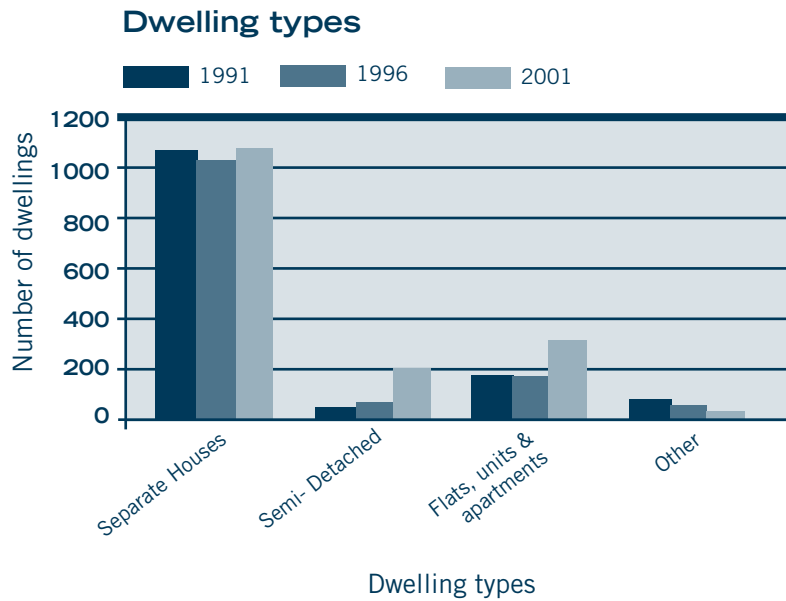
Watson is an established Inner North garden suburb of Canberra (refer to Drawing No. 1 – Watson’s context on page 10). North Watson is a newer and somewhat separate part of the overall neighbourhood, containing mostly higher-density multi-unit dwellings (townhouses and apartments). Watson is popular for its proximity to the vibrant Dickson shops, Mount Majura and Civic. The suburb was first gazetted as a Division name on 7 April 1960 with construction commencing in 1961. The suburb is named after the Honourable John Christian Watson, third Prime Minister of the Commonwealth and first Labour Prime Minister. The suburb is the first to welcome those entering the city from the Federal Highway.

The suburb is characterised by having a flat terrain. The Watson Local Centre is a vibrant shopping facility offering a range of commercial services. The neighbourhood enjoys a series of finger parks, which radiate out from the Centre; other Urban Open Spaces, including Justice Robert Hope Park and the North Watson Woodland, service the northern part of the neighbourhood. The Majura Primary School serves Watson, Downer and Hackett.



One of Watson’s much valued parks

The following table illustrates the diverse range of dwellings available:



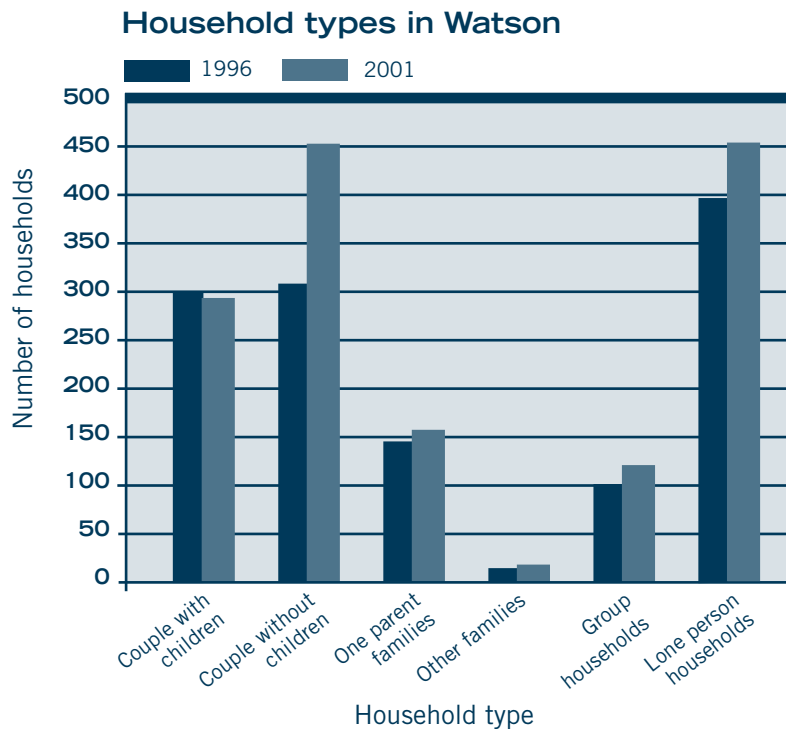
It is clear from the Neighbourhood Planning collaborations that the neighbourhoods of Downer, Watson and Hackett see themselves as a definite district. This is due to a number of factors: the suburbs were all established in 1960 or soon thereafter; they have a significant visual and physical relationship to Mount Majura and associated ranges; and all appreciate their proximity to the diversity and convenience of Dickson shops and also Civic. It is worth noting that the neighbourhood of Dickson also sees itself as the fourth partner in the district.

The People

In 2001 Watson’s population was 3,850 persons – in 1996 it was 3,496 and in 1991 it was 3,712. The median age of the Watson population is 31 years, the same as it was in 1996 and 1991. In 2001 11% of Watson’s population was aged 65 years and over (compared to 14.1% for Downer and 15.7% for Hackett).

The above table is in accordance with common nationwide trends, including the decrease in the number of coupled families with children, and the increases in coupled families without children, one-parent families and lone person households.

The range of family types in Watson is illustrated by the following:

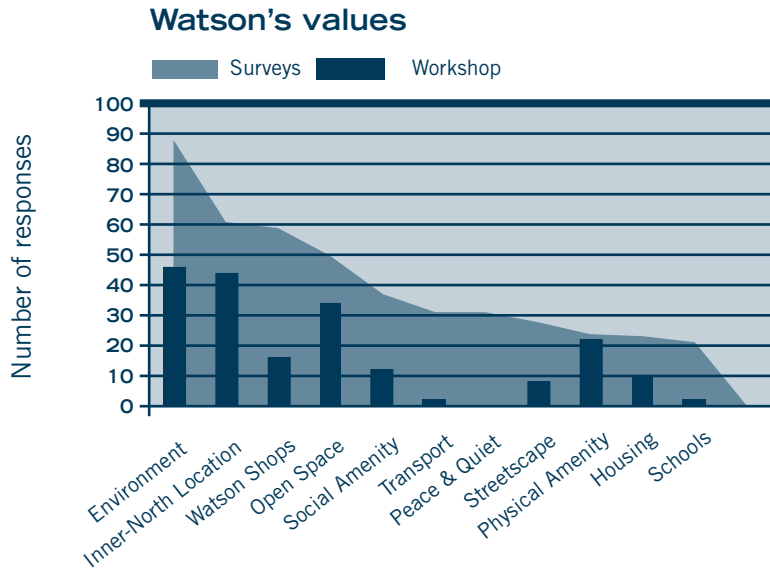


In Watson at present the median house price is \$300,000 (source:www.allhomes.com.au) compared to the ACT's median of \$305,000 (source: *The Canberra Plan*, 2004). This represents a significant increase since 1999, when the median property price was \$154,000.

Values of the current neighbourhood

Watson's most valued asset is the environment, primarily Watson Woodlands and Mount Majura Nature Reserve, as well as its access to Urban Open Space. Other prominent values are accessibility to services and amenities due to the Inner-North location and the importance of the Watson Local Centre. Those who responded to the Neighbourhood Survey particularly valued the neighbourhood's peace and quiet.

The following table illustrates Watson’s values – the survey requested respondents provide information in terms of ‘The things I value most in my neighbourhood and why’. The table compares values shared during the Neighbourhood Survey, held in April 2003 against those shared during the Visions Workshop, held in May 2003).



Key

Open Space (Parks, ovals, bushland)

Inner North Location (Proximity to Dickson & Civic, services & amenities)

Housing (Low density, large blocks, single detached dwelling, limited high density)

Streetscape (Street trees, vegetation, gardens, wide streets)

Peace & Quiet (Ambience, quietness of streets, minimal traffic)

Social Amenity (Social diversity, privacy, safety, sense of community)

Physical Amenity (Physical characteristics of neighbourhood)

Environment (Reserves, trees, vegetation, wildlife, flora & fauna)

Transport (Access to transport, including public transport)

Schools (Access to and quality of)

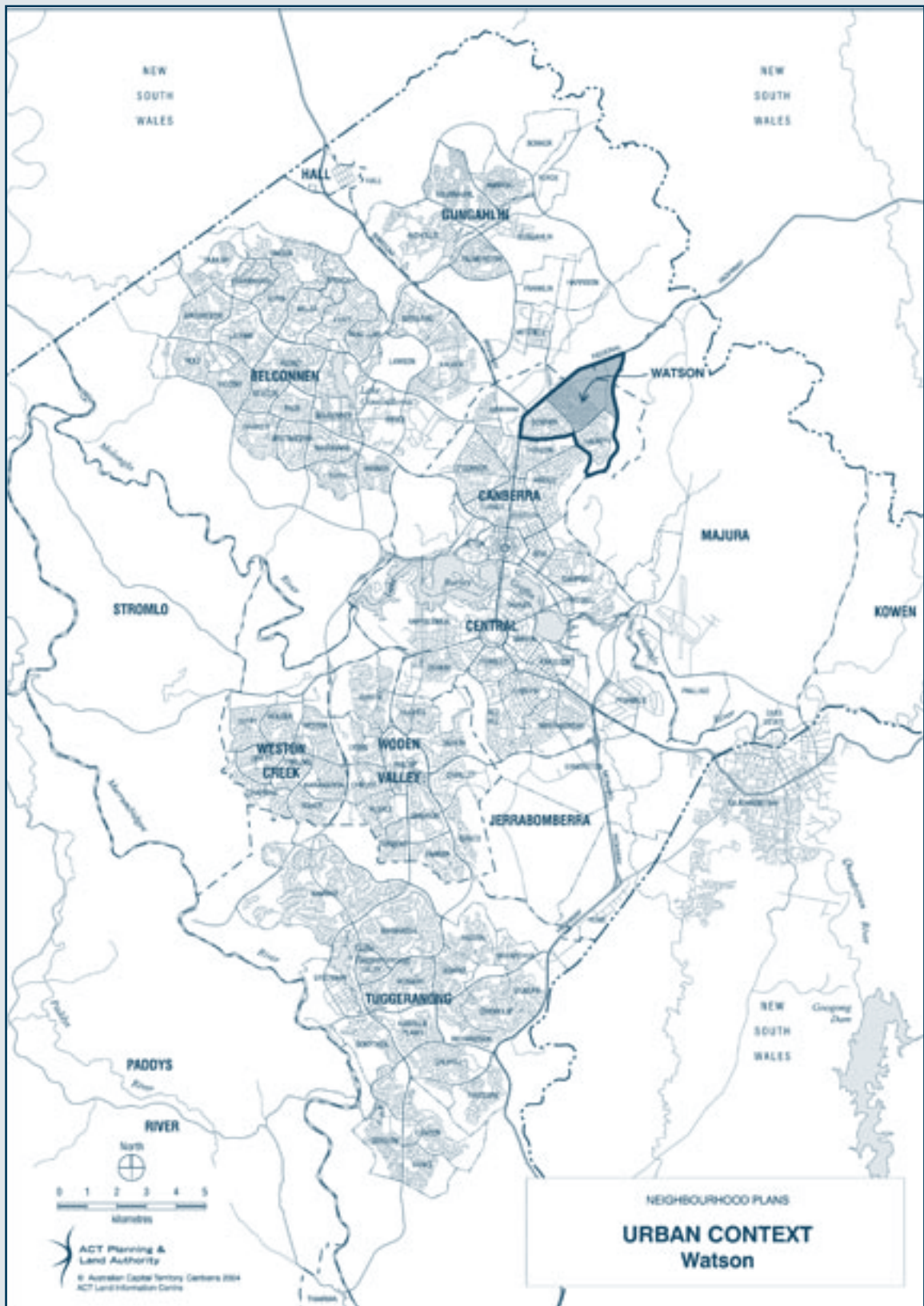
What are Watson's favourite places?

- **Mount Majura/Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve**
- **Watson Local Centre** (Carlo's takeaway, IGA, pharmacy/post office.)
- **Open space** (Ovals, parks, playgrounds, Andrew Street)
- **Watson woodland**
- **Where I live** (Our home, where I live, our street, views)
- **Dickson shops** (Library, pool)

What is the one thing Watson would like to see more of?

- **Paths** (bike paths, additional footpaths, improve maintenance of footpaths)
- **Housing consideration** (improve quality of housing, less higher density housing, provide for open space in new developments)
- **Improve shops** (more cafes, improve the shops, increase the size of Watson shops)
- **Open space** (additional recreational opportunities for children, more open space, improve maintenance of open space)
- **Transport/traffic** (improve traffic calming)
- **More community facilities**
- **Improve the lighting**
- **Improve maintenance in general**

Drawing 1 – Watson’s context



The Canberra Plan

The Plan for Canberra in the 21st century will guide the city's growth and development for this generation, and beyond. It provides a clear direction that will ensure Canberra retains the character that has been central to our first 90 years. As a framework for action by community and governments, *The Canberra Plan* has several major components. These include *The Canberra Social Plan*, *The Economic White Paper* and *The Canberra Spatial Plan*. *The Canberra Plan* envisages the following – a city:

- Confident in its role as national capital.
- With a high-quality built environment that celebrates Canberra's planning legacy and national role.
- Uplifting and inspiring, with liveable neighbourhoods and an extraordinary range of public spaces that attract us to meet, relax and celebrate.
- Respecting our magnificent natural environment and cultural heritage.
- The model of sustainable urban development in the 21st century.

The Canberra Spatial Plan

The Canberra Spatial Plan's Strategic Direction responds to changes that will occur within the community of Canberra over the next 30 years and beyond. Population growth, demographic change and household change underpin the need to plan for growth and change in Canberra. In order to ensure that we can sustainably provide for this community of the future, *The Canberra Spatial Plan* puts in place a framework to accommodate a range of population growth scenarios, up to half a million for the Canberra-Queanbeyan metropolitan area. The key initiatives that are critical to achieve the Strategic Direction include:

- Higher density residential development within the existing urban area, providing easy access between home and places of work, education, community services and cultural activities. Primarily this increased population will occur within Central Canberra in Civic, along Northbourne Avenue, Constitution Avenue, in Barton, Kingston and around the town centres with limited change to existing suburban areas. People will enjoy a choice of housing.
- Future residential settlement will continue to take place in Gungahlin, and subject to detailed suitability and feasibility investigations followed by necessary policy amendments, will also commence in the Molonglo Valley in the short to medium term. If the city continues to grow in population beyond the capacity of these areas, further settlement will be accommodated on the Kowen Plateau.
- Civic and the central area will form a strong dynamic heart to the Territory and surrounding NSW – a centre of culture, business, ideas and creativity; retaining and attracting jobs, people and important events.

- Civic and existing centres will be the focus of employment growth, with existing corridors of employment being reinforced by clustering at nodes along transport corridors (additional district activity nodes will be located in the Molonglo Valley and the Kowen Plateau when these areas are developed).
- Future industrial, broadacre and transport related employment growth will be accommodated within existing industrial areas and the corridor comprising Majura and Symonston valleys including the airport and Hume.
- Nature reserves and other land which provides significant habitats for wildlife within the urban and non-urban areas will be managed for biodiversity conservation and linked together with the region by corridors that enable wildlife movement.
- Major transport connections, including public transport, will link the town centres to Civic, and link future urban settlement in the Molonglo Valley and the Kowen Plateau to major employment corridors; Majura Highway will be upgraded to form part of a critical regional transport link and together with Gungahlin Drive will form the major outer by-passes of Civic, keeping through traffic away from the heart of the city.
- A Bushfire Abatement Zone will be declared and managed to protect the city from the possible impacts of major bushfire events.
- The non-urban areas that form the rural setting of the city (outside of nature conservation areas) will be primarily used for sustainable agriculture (including forestry west of the Murrumbidgee River). Historical rural settlements form part of the rural setting.
- The water catchments for the existing dams supplying water to Canberra and the catchment of possible future potable water supply dams for the ACT and its region will be protected from any development that would adversely affect the quality of that water. The sub-catchments of the ACT watercourses will be managed to protect water quality.
- The elements that contribute to the national capital significance of the ACT will be preserved. These include the Central National Area, the landscape setting including the National Capital Open Space System, major approach routes (Barton Highway, Federal Highway, Majura Highway and Monaro Highway) and the roads connecting them to the Central National Area (described as National Capital Vista Routes).
- Significant assets that provide opportunities for future economic growth of the Territory will be protected. These include the Mount Stromlo Observatory and Canberra International Airport. An Aircraft Noise Protection Corridor is identified for the Majura-Symonston Valleys. The Territory will not locate any residential development within these valleys where residents would be unacceptably impacted by airport noise. A low light zone is established around Mount Stromlo Observatory to enable the continued operation of this facility as the Molonglo Valley is developed.
- Development in the region is the responsibility of the NSW Government and surrounding local government. *The Canberra Spatial Plan* introduces strategic policies to input to the sustainable development of the ACT and region particularly with regard to water, biodiversity conservation, urban form and employment location, transport and service delivery.

Elements of the Strategic Direction to realise *The Canberra Spatial Plan* that are particularly relevant to Watson are as follows:

- Higher density residential development within the existing urban area, providing easy access between home and places of work, education, community services and cultural activities. Primarily this increased population will occur within Central Canberra in Civic, along Northbourne Avenue, Constitution Avenue, in Barton, Kingston and around the town centres with limited change to existing suburban areas. People will enjoy a choice of housing.
- Nature reserves and other land which provides significant habitats for wildlife within the urban and non-urban areas will be managed for biodiversity conservation and linked together with the region by corridors that enable wildlife movement.
- The elements that contribute to the national capital significance of the ACT will be preserved. These include the Central National Area, the landscape setting including the National Capital Open Space System, major approach routes (Barton Highway, Federal Highway, Majura Highway and Monaro Highway) and the roads connecting them to the Central National Area (described as National Capital Vista Routes).

Implications for Watson

The Canberra Spatial Plan's Strategic Direction requires Watson to provide a diverse range of housing choice at strategic locations, including:

- In Watson's Residential Core area adjacent the Watson Local Centre; and
- The exploration of options within the Watson Central Area (excluding Urban Open Space).

D Watson in the future

This section provides planning strategies for the future of the local shopping centre, open spaces, residential areas, community facilities and transport networks (roads, footpaths etc). A statement of existing character is provided for each of these neighbourhood features, followed by a statement of the likely **future** character.

This section should be read in conjunction with Drawing No. 2 – Watson in the future.

The future character of each element is driven by a **neighbourhood** vision:

- *Watson in the future will be a neighbourhood that respects its Inner North location whilst striving to be a model of healthy, liveable, and sustainable living for a diverse range of people. The neighbourhood's Urban Open Spaces will not only be conserved but also enhanced, and the local centre will be a thriving community and commercial heart serving both the local and surrounding communities.*

The planning strategies for each element are driven by a **district-wide planning principle**:

- *Consider Watson, Downer and Hackett as part of North Canberra with three identifiable neighbourhoods, each with their own individuality and uniqueness that is respected and enhanced.*

Watson Local Centre

Existing Character

The Watson Local Centre (Section 20), located on the intersection of Windeyer Street and Knox Street, has a vibrant community and commercial atmosphere, and currently contains a supermarket, a popular café/restaurant, take-away and newsagent, amongst others. The Majura Primary School is located nearby on Knox Street. The main Local Centre building is a single storey, brick and tile construction. Canberra Urban Parks and Places recently upgraded the Centre's public spaces, which gives it a well-cared-for ambience. The Commercial land-use aims to provide for convenience retailing and other accessible, convenient shopping and community and business services to meet the daily needs of the local population. This land-use allows for businesses, offices, community facilities, light industry as well residential.



The popular Watson Local Centre

Future Character

The Watson Local Centre will continue to be a strong commercial and community facility. The Centre will service the Watson community as well as the neighbouring communities. It will provide a range of shops, possibly including a supermarket, professional office suites, cafes/restaurants, community facilities as well as a range of public places and spaces. The Centre's buildings could be renovated or developed to include shop-top housing on the upper floor (redevelopment will be limited to a maximum of two storeys). The Centre will provide places for the local community to meet and enjoy the central location.

Please note: the ACT Planning and Land Authority proposes that a detailed study of the Watson Central Area be carried out in due course should funding be available.

Strategies for the future of Watson's Local Centre

Key strategy:

- Support and enhance the community and commercial life of the Watson Local Centre in order to continue to offer convenient local shopping and popular meeting places for the Watson neighbourhood as well as adjacent neighbourhoods.

General strategies:

- Enhance the Watson Local Centre and immediate environs – the Watson Central Area – as the neighbourhood heart.
- Recognise the close community and commercial relationship between the Watson Local Centre and the Dickson Group Centre and the Hackett Local Centre.
- Reinforce the physical relationship between the Watson Local Centre and the surrounding Residential Core Areas, particularly in terms of built form, tree planting and pedestrian movement.
- Prioritise the needs of people with special mobility needs.
- Encourage a diversity of community, commercial, professional, entertainment and residential opportunities.
- Local centre redevelopment will not encroach on adjacent Urban Open Space.
- Explore the integration of the Watson Local Centre with the Canberra Technology Park and its environs.



Green space adjacent the Watson Shops

- Explore opportunities to provide outdoor eating/meeting places.
- Provide adequate parking and lighting.
- Consideration will need to be given to the ACT Government's Graffiti Management Strategy in the provision of assets such as seats, lights, walls etc.
- Reference should also be made to the *ACT Crime Prevention and Urban Design Resource Manual (2000)*.
- Ensure any future development have an acceptable Waste Management Plan and adhere to the Development Control Code for Best Practice Waste Management so that waste and recycling is stored correctly and separately within lease boundaries, and access is provided for both commercial and domestic vehicles.

Principles for best-practice urban design

The following is provided as a guide to possible new development associated with Watson's local centre facilities. It is not a definitive list.

Character

Place making should respond to the existing natural and developed features of the environmental context. A place that enhances the distinctive local landscapes, sense of place and history whilst providing a quality living environment will establish a rich environmental character unique to its locality. A response context analysis will identify:

- distinctive landscapes
- natural features
- locally distinctive built form
- street patterns which respond to the context
- special spaces of natural or cultural significance
- skylines and roofscapes
- building materials
- local culture and traditions
- avoiding standard solutions

Continuity and enclosure

The form and fabric of a place define the living environment and establish a hierarchy of both public and private spaces providing clarity of function and movement:

- streets, footpaths and open spaces overlooked by buildings
- clear distinction between public and private space
- avoiding gaps in the lines of buildings
- enclosing streets and other spaces by buildings and trees of a scale that feels comfortable and appropriate to the character of the space
- No leftover spaces unused and uncared for

Quality of the 'public realm'

Good urban design promotes a sense of well-being and amenity by ensuring recognition of the natural context and the functional requirements of the community and responding with:

- public spaces and routes that are lively and pleasant to use
- a feeling of safety and security
- uncluttered and easily maintained streets and public places and carefully detailed with integrated public art and functional elements
- well-designed lighting and street furniture
- places suited to the needs of everyone, including those with particular mobility needs
- attractive and robust planting appropriate to the locality

Legibility

Legibility principles establish an understanding of place and way finding for residents and visitors. A discernable planning structure and complementary place making ensure that the living environment has a clear image and is easy to understand. Enhancing the legibility of a place will include the identification and incorporation into planning of such components as:

- natural landmarks and focal points
- views and view corridors
- clear and easily navigatable routes
- discernable gathering places
- gateways to particular areas
- edges and buffers
- lighting
- works of art and craft
- signage and way-markers

Diversity

Diversity of space and function provides our community with a range of experience and choice. This can be achieved through:

- place making to provide for variety of function and land use
- provision for a broad cross-section of community and cultural values
- variety of built form and development character which is sensitive to context
- opportunities for biodiversity

Residential Areas



Aspinall Street

Current Character

The dominant residential character of Watson is comprised of low-density, single storey family dwellings. North Watson, however, is significantly higher in density, providing predominantly multi-unit accommodation (apartments). Many of Watson's streetscapes are mature and in many cases impressive. The topography is in general relatively flat, with many areas affording views to Mount Majura, Mount Ainslie and, to a lesser extent, Black Mountain. Dwellings are commonly of brick and tile construction, some of which are showing their age, while others have been modernised through renovation or rebuilding. Setbacks (the distance between the property boundary and the front face of the building) are generous as is the distance between houses, factors that contribute to the garden suburb nature of the neighbourhood.

Future Character

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes that the majority of older Watson will remain predominantly low-density, single dwellings on generous blocks. However, it does propose the retention of the Residential Core Area (known as the A10 area specific policy in the Territory Plan) on blocks adjacent the Watson Local Centre. As a result, Watson will contain two distinct residential areas:

- the Suburban Area – the majority of the neighbourhood; and
- the Residential Core Area, adjacent the Watson Local Centre.

It is important to note that change allowed for by the Neighbourhood Plan, in conjunction with the Territory Plan, will occur over time. In many cases it will be dependent on current lessees deciding to either to redevelop the blocks themselves or to sell to another lessee with the intention to develop.

Future character of the Suburban Areas

The Suburban Area of Watson is the residential area that will change the least over time. However, as has been the trend over the last decade or so, some of the existing dwellings in the Suburban Area will be renovated to varying degrees to modernise or to adapt to contemporary ways of life. Some residents may elect to demolish their dwellings altogether and rebuild new houses that better suit their needs; some will elect to build dual occupancies. Whatever the change the low-density character, established street trees and mature garden setting will remain.

The rules applying to the Suburban Area preserve the existing 'garden city' character of the majority of the Watson neighbourhood by restricting redevelopment. Developments prohibited in Suburban Areas are: apartments, townhouses and triple occupancy housing development on blocks originally used for single dwellings. The redevelopment of new single dwellings and dual occupancies must be in keeping with the existing suburban character. Dual occupancies are subject to significantly tighter controls on the overall size of both houses. This reduces the impact of dual occupancy development and ensures the retention of significant areas for trees and gardens. Dual occupancy dwelling at the rear of blocks are subject to additional specific height and size controls; the maximum height of buildings is two storeys (8.5 metres). In order to further limit the impact of dual occupancy development the minimum block size for such developments in Suburban Areas (as well as Residential Core Areas) is 800m². Unit titling is only allowed for supportive housing (accommodation for those requiring care provided by a Territory-approved organisation).

While remaining within the parameters of controls within the Territory Plan, those who wish to redevelop an existing house adjacent to pocket parks and laneways are encouraged to focus the new dwelling on these neighbourhood features. Windows or decks overlooking a laneway can aid in improving the safety of these public places.

Future character of the Residential Core Area

The Residential Core Area is identified in the Territory Plan as Area Specific Policy A10. This policy allows opportunities for medium density housing in areas immediately around Town, Group and Local Centres. The Residential Core Area is located on blocks adjacent the Watson Local Centre and over time will offer a diverse range of dwelling types, including one and two-storey dual-occupancies and town houses of no more than two storeys (8.5 metres). Despite the modest increase in density the established street trees and mature garden setting will remain.

In addition to the maximum building height of two storeys, attics and basements may also be permitted. A maximum 50% plot ratio applies to street-based layouts (developments where the building is to the front of blocks). The two units of a dual occupancy development cannot exceed 35% coverage of the block. Subdivision of single blocks is not permitted on blocks less than 800m².

Strategies for the future of the Residential Areas

Key strategies for all residential areas:

- Promote high-quality residential development that is sympathetic and appropriate to the existing garden suburb neighbourhood character in terms of scale, form and landscape setting.
- Provide a diversity of housing choice for singles, couples and families of different sizes and ages in appropriate locations.
- Investigate options for the provision of a diverse range of housing choice for those who wish to age in Watson, including supportive housing and cooperative housing.

General strategies:

- Maintain the high-quality landscape setting and abundance of mature and healthy street trees on both public and private land.

- Ensure the provision of appropriate housing for the aged, retiring and disabled in central rather than peripheral locations within easy access to shops, public transport and community facilities.
- Maintain and enhance the existing street pattern by ensuring buildings relate to the street rather than detract from it.
- Identify, recognise and protect the qualities that establish the neighbourhood's Inner North suburban identity and distinctive character.
- Retain and enhanced existing view corridors to Mount Majura, Mount Ainslie and Black Mountain.
- Retain a mix of public and private housing.
- Maximise permeable surfaces to reduce run-off and erosion and assist hydration.
- Safeguard privacy and maximise and maintain light and sun access to dwellings.
- Protect, maintain and replace street trees.
- Ensure all residential developments facilitate a reduction in water and energy consumption.
- Ensure any future development have an acceptable Waste Management Plan and adhere to the Development Control Code for Best Practice Waste Management so that waste and recycling is stored correctly and separately within lease boundaries, and access is provided for both commercial and domestic vehicles.
- Encourage residential redevelopment around parks and laneways to focus on these assets in order to increase passive surveillance and family-friendly environments.
- Explore adaptable housing opportunities.

Strategies for residential development in Residential Core Areas in addition to the above:

- Maintain landscape setting and protect street trees (note: all significant trees are protected by the *ACT Tree Protection (Interim Scheme) Act 2001*).
- Retain verge widths and soft landscape surfaces to create open space, opportunity to improve privacy between dwellings and assist with absorption of water.
- Siting and design of buildings should address the street to maximise views to the street and pedestrian/cycle paths.
- Building should fit with existing street patterns.
- Provide adequate parking.
- The faces of buildings should be articulated and avoid continuous “walls of development” (i.e. long, uninterrupted and unbroken building frontages produced by redevelopments).
- Interesting, place appropriate and environmentally sensitive design and innovation should be encouraged in new developments.
- Maximise the liveability of higher density living near the shops – consider issues such as noise, café/restaurant odours, rubbish collection etc.

- Reference should be made to the *ACT Crime Prevention and Urban Design Resource Manual (2000)*.

Principles for best-practice residential redevelopment

Good design...

- **...responds to and reinforces the quality and identity of the area context.** Context can be defined as the key natural, built and social features of an area. Responding to context involves identifying the desirable features of a location's current character or, in the case of precincts undergoing a transition, the desired future character as stated in planning and design policies.
- **...appropriately arranges buildings and spaces – this is also part of the development context and will influence the quality of the residential environment.** Issues include building footprint and envelope, private open space, semi-public open space (setting for dwellings), setbacks for amenity, street appearance, access and parking, and services and facilities.
- **...aims to deliver an appropriate scale in terms of the bulk and height that suits the scale of the street and the surrounding buildings.** Establishing an appropriate scale requires a considered response to the scale of existing development. In precincts undergoing a transition, proposed bulk and height needs to achieve the scale identified for the desired future character of the area.
- **...achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building's purpose, in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type and the manipulation of building features.** Appropriate built form defines the public domain, contributes to the character of streetscapes and parks, including their views and vistas, and provides internal amenity and outlook.
- **...delivers a density appropriate for a site and its context, in terms of floor space yields (number of residents and functions).** Appropriate densities are sustainable and consistent with the existing density in an area or, in precincts undergoing a transition, are consistent with the stated desired future density. Sustainable densities respond to the regional context, availability of infrastructure, public transport, community facilities and environmental quality.
- **...integrates landscape and buildings to achieve greater amenity, sustainability and aesthetic quality for occupants, neighbours and the adjoining public realm.** Landscape design builds on the existing site's natural and cultural features in responsible and creative ways. It enhances the development's natural environmental performance by coordinating water and soil management, solar access, microclimate, tree canopy and habitat values. It contributes to the positive image and contextual fit of development through respect for streetscape and neighbourhood character. Landscape design should optimise usability, privacy and social opportunity, equitable access and respect for neighbours' amenity, and provide for practical establishment and long-term management.
- **...ensures amenity in relation to physical, spatial and environmental qualities.** Optimising amenity requires appropriate room dimensions and proportions, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, efficient layouts and service areas, outlook and ease of access for all age groups and degrees of mobility.

- **...optimises safety and security, both internal to the development and for the public realm.** Optimising safety and security is achieved by maximising internal privacy, avoiding dark and non visible areas, maximising activity on streets, providing clear, safe access points, providing quality public spaces, lighting and clear definition between public and private spaces.
- **...responds to the social context and the aspirations of the local community in terms of lifestyles, affordability and access to social facilities.** Development should be responsive to the existing social context and the needs of the neighbourhood or provide for future desired community needs in the case of redevelopment areas.
- **...incorporates good design principles that establish the aesthetic quality of the development in the composition of building features, textures, materials and colours, and the integration of function, structure and enclosure features.** Development of design principles should incorporate a response to the environment and context, particularly to the desirable features of the existing streetscape or, in precincts undergoing transition, contribute to the desired future character of the area.

Urban Open Space

Current Character

The Watson neighbourhood has a significant amount of Urban Open Space. Four ‘finger parks’ radiate out from the centre of the suburb. These parks, planted with a variety of native and exotic trees, and some containing playgrounds, are used for passive recreation as well as for walking through the neighbourhood. A long linear green space, stretching from the Federal Highway (at the Stirling Avenue intersection) to Antill Street, divides older Watson from North Watson. Justice Robert Hope Park and the associated North Watson Woodland abut the long linear park. Watson Oval is centrally located and is another of the neighbourhood’s much valued Urban Open Space resources. The Oval is used for informal sporting activities as well as other passive recreations, such as dog walking.



An example of Watson’s strips of Urban Open Space

Future Character

The Watson Neighbourhood Plan proposes no changes to the Urban Open Space network in the neighbourhood – parks will remain parks. However, the Neighbourhood Plan imagines that the Urban Open Spaces in the future will be better augmented with features such as seating, lighting and footpaths to ensure that they continue to serve the community well. The Urban Open Spaces will also be planted with a more diverse range of indigenous and native vegetation to maximise Watson’s contribution to the biodiversity of the city. This is particularly relevant due to the suburb’s proximity to the Mount Majura Nature Reserve. Accessibility for all, particularly those with special mobility needs, will be made a priority. High-quality landscaping, including the careful selection of appropriate tree species, will knit together the areas of Urban Open Space and help to link older Watson with North Watson and across Antill Street to Mount Majura.

Strategies for the future of the Urban Open Space

Key Strategy:

- Redevelopment will not encroach on areas designated as Urban Open Space under the Territory Plan.

General Strategies:

- Maintain and enhance the quality of Watson’s Urban Open Spaces.
- Emphasise existing view corridors to Mount Majura, Mount Ainslie and Black Mountain by ensuring new buildings respond to the views that are currently afforded from various vantage points in the neighbourhood.
- Create a friendly and useable environment by providing Urban Open Spaces with appropriate recreational facilities such as seating and lighting.
- Ensure safe routes through Urban Open Space.
- Enhance biodiversity by planting appropriate species and creating diverse habitats on appropriate Urban Open Spaces. (Consideration will need to be given to the ACT Government’s Fire Fuel Management Plan.)
- Encourage wildlife into the suburb by providing suitable habitats where appropriate, and enhance the ability of wildlife to move through the suburb.
- Use a coordinated suite of facilities and installations, such as barbecue, seats and lighting, to create cohesive areas of Urban Open Space. Consideration will need to be given to the ACT Government’s Graffiti Management Strategy.
- Retain and maintain significant trees.

Community Facilities

Current Character

Watson contains a number of community facilities, including the Majura Primary School on Knox Street, childcare facilities on Burton Street, the Canberra Technology Park on the corner of Phillip Avenue and Windeyer Street (which once housed the Watson CIT campus), and a cluster of religious organisation on Phillip Avenue and Antill Street, including the Rosary School, the Australian Catholic University and the Holy Rosary Church. A facility for potters is located on Aspinall Street in North Watson. Community Facility land-use makes provision for the health, educational, intellectual, religious, cultural and welfare needs of the ACT community.



Majura Primary, which serves the Watson neighbourhood, as well as Hackett and Downer and beyond

Future Character

The Watson Local Centre and the Majura Primary School will continue to be the heart of the Watson community. Community rooms will be included in a truly mixed-use local shopping centre. In relation to the broader Watson Central Area, in time the CREEDA facility in Downer may share the Canberra Technology Park site. Opportunities for the provision of aged persons' accommodation on appropriate sites adjacent the Canberra Technology Park will be investigated, particularly those within close proximity to the Watson Local Centre. All redevelopment on Community Facility land will be a maximum of two storeys (within 30 metres from blocks in residential Land Use Policy areas) with a range of landscaped open spaces, most of which will be available for use by the broader Watson community. Accessibility for all, particularly those with special mobility needs, will be made a priority.

Strategies for the future of the Community Facilities

Key Strategy

- Retain the integrity of land defined under the Territory Plan as Community Facility.
- Ensure that adequate Community Facility land is available for the needs of current and future residents – there is to be no loss of community land in Watson unless it can be demonstrated to be surplus to community needs.

General Strategies

- Encourage the centralising of community facilities that have a district focus to be accommodated within the former Watson CIT building, which currently houses the Canberra Technology Park.
- Support the relocation of community facilities that have a neighbourhood focus to the Watson Local Centre.
- Allow for the increased use and development of adaptable buildings that meet current needs and adapt for the changing needs of the future.
- Enhance the ability of wildlife to move through the suburb.
- Encourage a diversity of community uses on the larger areas of Community Facility land.
- Retain significant trees on Community Facility land.

Movement Networks

Current Situation

Watson's transport networks consist of roads, footpaths, and public transport routes. In terms of roads, the neighbourhood has a street hierarchy of 'access roads' servicing the subdivisions, connecting to 'collector streets' such as Windeyer and Knox Streets, that in turn feed traffic into the major arterial roads such as Phillip Avenue, Antill Street and Northbourne Avenue. 'Collector streets' by design collect vehicles from nearby local streets and are often used by buses.

Watson's footpaths are in various states of repair: street trees, whilst providing important visual amenity, can reduce the effectiveness of facilities such as street lighting and signage; they can also damage footpaths.

The neighbourhood is well serviced by public transport, with bus stops placed on Windeyer and Knox Streets, Phillip Avenue, Antill Street and Northbourne Avenue.

Watson does not have its own dedicated cycle paths and connections to adjacent neighbourhoods, particularly connections to the Sullivans Creek dedicated cycle path, are lacking.

Future Situation

Watson in the future will continue to offer a diverse range of accessible transport options, including car-based travel, public transport, cycle routes and pedestrian footpaths. In general, roads will be free of through traffic originating from adjacent neighbourhoods. Residential redevelopment will take advantage of Watson's bus routes and stops, particularly those closest to the Watson Local Centre, and Windeyer and Knox Streets. For commuting cyclists, Watson will be connected to Civic and Woden by the Woden to Dickson On-road Cycle Path (due for completion in mid-2004). Watson's footpaths will be well maintained, linking the suburban areas with areas of Urban Open Space and Watson Village as well as the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Strategies for the future of Watson's movement networks

Key Strategy

- Provide a diversity of accessible transport options.

General Strategies

- Discourage through traffic.
- Prioritise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Provide appropriate lighting levels of lighting for pedestrians and vehicles and safe routes of travel for pedestrians, cyclist and motor vehicle; provide an accessible route of travel to accommodate those with special mobility needs.
- Promote and support the use of public transport.
- Prioritise the need of pedestrians by providing appropriate infrastructure such as footpaths and crossing; provide an accessible route of travel to accommodate those with special mobility needs.
- Provide appropriate lighting and footpaths.
- Provide a safe and accessible route of travel for residents of facilities.
- Ensure those current traffic problems are not exacerbated by the implementation of Residential Core Area Urban Housing policies.
- Provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to Northbourne Avenue and Dickson Group Centre.

How the Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented

The Watson Neighbourhood Plan recommends the implementation of the following key actions:

- **Key Action:** The ACT Planning and Land Authority to prepare a **companion guideline document** to the Good Design guideline series to provide direction for the developer, the community and the development assessment officers as to what will be sympathetic and complementary design for the type of development permitted to occur within Residential Core Areas (A10).
- **Key Action:** In due course and should funding be available, the ACT Planning and Land Authority to undertake a **detailed urban design study** of the Watson Central Area in conjunction with the key stakeholders; this study is to be based on the principles in this Neighbourhood Plan, particularly those pertaining to the Watson Local Centre, Residential Areas, and Community Facilities.
- **Key Action:** In due course and should funding be available, Roads ACT to **review the Local Area Traffic Management Study** for Watson and Downer (1997) and, if necessary, undertake additional investigations to resolve current and future traffic management requirements. Specific areas requiring resolution: enhancing pedestrian safety at the corner of Phillip Avenue and Windeyer Street, consider traffic calming on Knox Street adjacent the Majura School and Watson Oval, improve the intersection of Knox Street and Antill Street.
- **Key Action:** In due course and should funding be available, Roads ACT and Canberra Urban Parks to **develop network plans for cycle and pedestrian paths and street lighting**. Scope of works to include investigate conflict between assets (e.g. lighting and pavement) and street trees and how to ensure people are able to move through the suburb safely and easily, enjoying the benefits of mature street trees on verges as well as good lighting and pathways free of hazard.

How the Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed

A major and comprehensive review of the Watson Neighbourhood Plan will be conducted seven (7) years after the Plan has been placed on the ACT Planning and Land Authority's Register of Planning Guidelines. The review process will seek to ensure that the Watson Neighbourhood Plan remains responsive to the changing physical, social, environmental and demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood. The review process is critical, as the development of the neighbourhood needs to remain consistent with the vision and strategies set out in this Plan and *The Canberra Spatial Plan*. Minor reviews will be conducted prior to the seven-year time frame, although this will be dependent on major changes in policy framework and will only be conducted by an agreed process.

For more information visit the ACT Planning and Land Authority.

Website: <http://www.actpla.act.gov.au>

Email: neighbourhoodplanning@act.gov.au

Phone: 02 6205 0087

Summary reports are available for each of the collaborations undertaken in order to develop this Neighbourhood Plan – they are available on the ACT Planning and Land Authority website or by telephoning 6205 0087.

Documents relevant to the Watson Neighbourhood Plan include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Territory Plan (updated regularly)
- The Canberra Plan (2004)
- The Canberra Spatial Plan (2004)
- The Sustainable Transport Plan (2004)
- The Guide to Good Design (2004)
- The Sustainability Guide (2004)
- The Garden City Provisions of the Territory Plan – the facts (2004)
- The Downer Neighbourhood Plan (2004)
- The Hackett Neighbourhood Plan (2004)
- The Dickson Neighbourhood Plan (2003)
- The Lyneham Neighbourhood Plan (2002)
- People, Place and Prosperity: A Policy for Sustainability in the ACT (2003)
- Safe Routes Pilot Study (2001)
- ACT Parking and Vehicular Access Guidelines (2000)
- ACT Crime Prevention and Urban Design Resource Manual (2000)
- Canberra Bicycle 2000 – A Bicycle Strategy for the ACT

Drawing 2 - Watson in the future



Please note: this drawing is not the Territory Plan.

