

Blacktown City Centre

Places to Love Case Study:
Blacktown City Council

The Heart of Blacktown Place Identity





Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Government acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Aboriginal peoples take a holistic view of land, water and culture and see them as one, not in isolation to each other. This Places to Love Case Study is based on the premise upheld by Aboriginal peoples that if we care for Country, it will care for us.

Contents

Project at a glance	4
Project description	6
Community and stakeholder engagement	10
Evaluation	11
Timeline	12
Cost breakdown	12
Outcomes and lessons learnt	13
Photo diary	14



Local stories captured through art installations by local artist Ozlum Guccuk
Image courtesy: NSW Government



Patrick Street temporary parklet
Image courtesy: NSW Government

Project at a glance

The Heart of Blacktown demonstration project involved the development of Blacktown's Place Identity and Place Framework, which sets a road map for future developments, activities and events in Blacktown's CBD, to help create a city centre that reflects the area's unique qualities and responds to community needs and aspirations. As part of this project, several temporary activations tested placemaking ideas, including a women's night walk, pop-up park activation and art installations.

Project vision

To create vibrancy and activate public spaces across the CBD through temporary and semi-permanent change, driving social connection while also supporting the city centre's retail sector through the COVID-19 recovery and beyond.

Places to Love

Places to Love is a collaborative program between NSW Government and councils to trial demonstration projects that improve walkable access to, and the quality of, local public space.

In 2020-2022, six councils partnered with the program, including Blacktown City Council, to test placemaking activation ideas that enhance local identity.

Demonstration projects are a way to quickly test how to make public spaces more vibrant and active using pop-ups and semi-permanent changes to trial ideas and build the case for longer term change.

Places to Love is a rolling program with opportunities for other councils to be involved in the future.



What was implemented?

Through comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement, a Place Identity and a Place Framework were developed for the Blacktown city centre. Temporary and small budget activations were held in the precinct to test placemaking ideas to inform the strategies.

The main demonstration site was located within the diverse centre of Blacktown's Patrick Street precinct, located at a major pedestrian crossing thoroughfare between Blacktown Train Station and the entry to Westpoint Shopping Centre.

16 temporary seats 3 pop-up events

1 temporary mural at Patrick Street 4 temporary cube artworks

1,320 people walked through Patrick Street during pop-up events

1 Place Identity and Place Framework informed by the above trials.

Key outcomes

Council has:

- Endorsed the Place Identity and Place Framework for a two year period.
- Gathered information about local identity and place characteristics.
- Improved community and business stakeholder relations through meaningful consultation and engagement.
- Shaped other local placemaking projects, including Made in Blacktown, F.A.M Fest and Blacktown Day + Night.



Mother's Day pop-up event with community members taking photos at the flower mural. Image courtesy: Blacktown City Council



Patrick Street temporary parklet. Image courtesy: NSW Government

Project description

Aims and objectives

The project aimed to understand Blacktown's current identity, and co-design a future vision with community and stakeholders by trialling and evaluating placemaking activations that improved walkable access and enhanced public space.

In addition, the project sought to foster relationships with community and stakeholders, such as local businesses, and improve communication with Council.

The Heart of Blacktown demonstration project was made up of three core elements:

Patrick Street temporary parklet

Through another NSW Government grant, a temporary parklet was installed in the pedestrian thoroughfare between Blacktown train station and Westpoint Shopping Centre, featuring planter boxes with seating, shade umbrellas and grassy squares, creating a pleasant place to sit and stay in the city centre. The Patrick Street parklet was a success, with many residents asking for it to be made permanent.

Community activations

Three pop-up activations were held to align with and inform the Place Identity and the Place Framework:

- Women's 'Walk and Talk', a night-time 'walkshop' to capture the voices and ideas of local women, and to better understand past experiences, perceptions and ideas for the city centre.
- Mother's Day event at Patrick Street parklet, a vibrant community event with a large flower wall for photo opportunities, chrysanthemum giveaways, free coffee, and live music.
- Cube in a Triangle, an installation of temporary artworks and furniture within the under-utilised pedestrian island next to Blacktown train station. Local artists were engaged to create artwork that told stories of the Blacktown community.

Place Identity and Place Framework

These documents are an outcome of place analysis, engagement, and pilot placemaking demonstrations. The Place Identity report describes the unique qualities of Blacktown and outlines the shared place vision for Blacktown city centre:

“Blacktown city centre is a fascinating metropolis of commercial and cultural exchange and community connection. The legacy and diversity of all our people inspires our future. Our cool and green walkable streets are safe. They provide a vibrant welcome for locals and visitors. It is a place of creativity and welcomes new ideas.”

The Place Framework details how the place vision will be realised through short-term activations and longer-term design recommendations.



Cover of 'Our Identity' Report, prepared by Blacktown City Council through the program

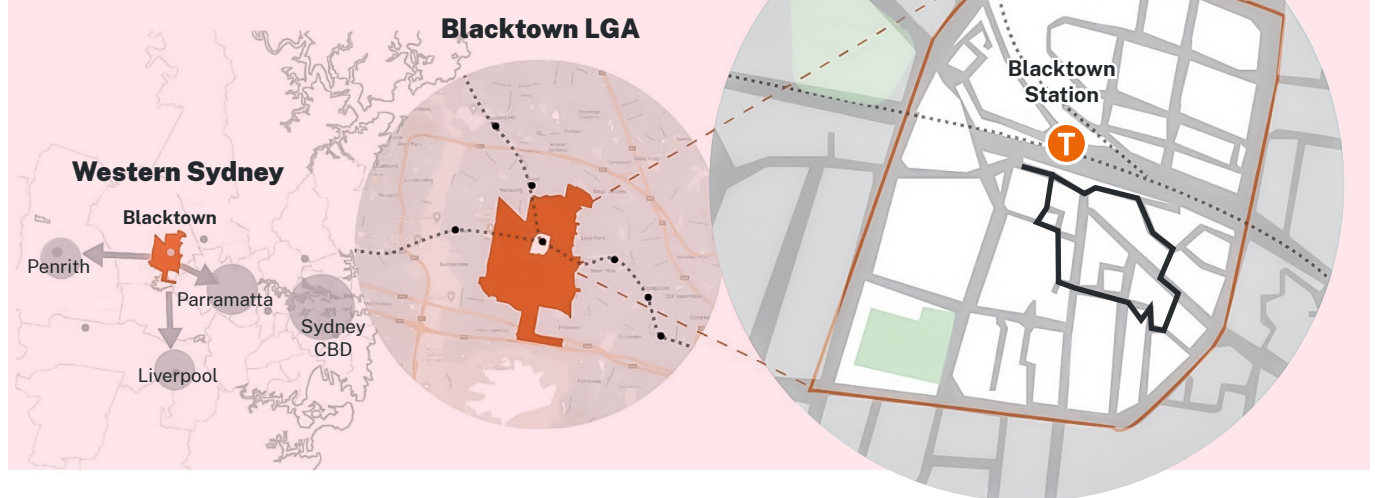
Project location

Blacktown is a rapidly growing area in the heart of western Sydney (see Figure 1). In 2021, Blacktown LGA was home to more than 396,000 residents, making it the most densely populated area in Western Sydney.

The Blacktown city centre contains a mix of retail, employment, health, education and recreation uses, and is well connected with train services and motorways, providing access to other strategic and metropolitan centres, and the future Western Sydney Aerotropolis. The city centre is a significant employment centre and currently transitioning into a health and education precinct, bringing growing demand for redevelopment in Blacktown.

The main demonstration site was located in the Patrick Street precinct at a major pedestrian crossing thoroughfare between Blacktown train station and the entry to Westpoint Shopping Centre. Other temporary activations occurred in this diverse precinct, including a women's night walk, community event, and art installations.

Figure 1: Context map illustrating the location of Blacktown in Western Sydney, including the Women's night walk route

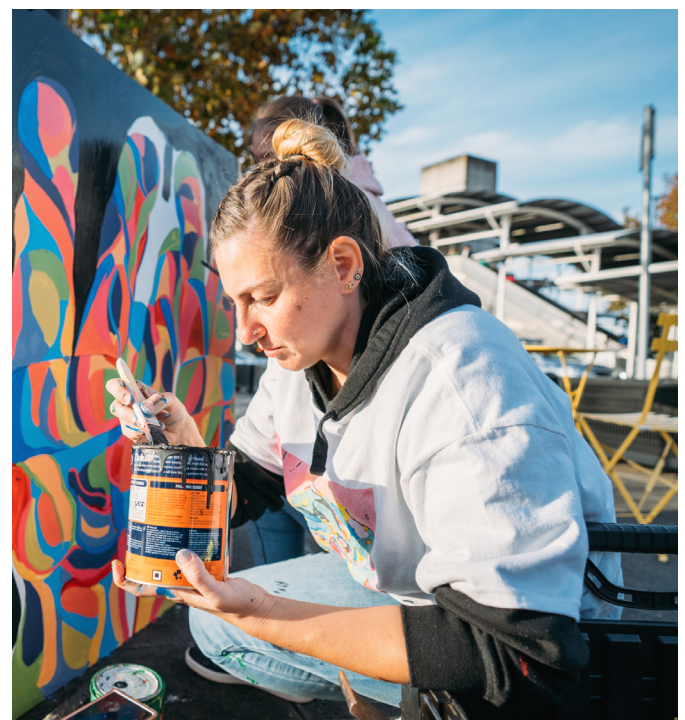


Strategic alignment

Heart of Blacktown has been informed by several NSW Government strategies and plans. These include the Greater Sydney Region Plan and Central City District Plan, which identify Blacktown as a strategic centre.

This project aligns with the vision of Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement, which outlines the importance of equitable access to open space to achieve a walkable, vibrant and healthy city. Specifically, it supports the action to undertake place-based planning for the Blacktown Urban Renewal Precinct, as well as planning for great places that foster healthy, creative, culturally rich, safe and socially connected communities.

Council documents, including the Night Time Economy Strategy and Open Space and Recreation Strategy, also propose the enhancement of open spaces and transport links as well as placemaking activations with the aim to make Blacktown a vibrant and walkable city.



Local stories were captured through art installations by local artist Ozlum Guccuk. Image courtesy: NSW Government

Design and delivery

Concept plan

The concept design intended to celebrate local identity and place characteristics, as well as enhance the overall appeal of the demonstration sites.

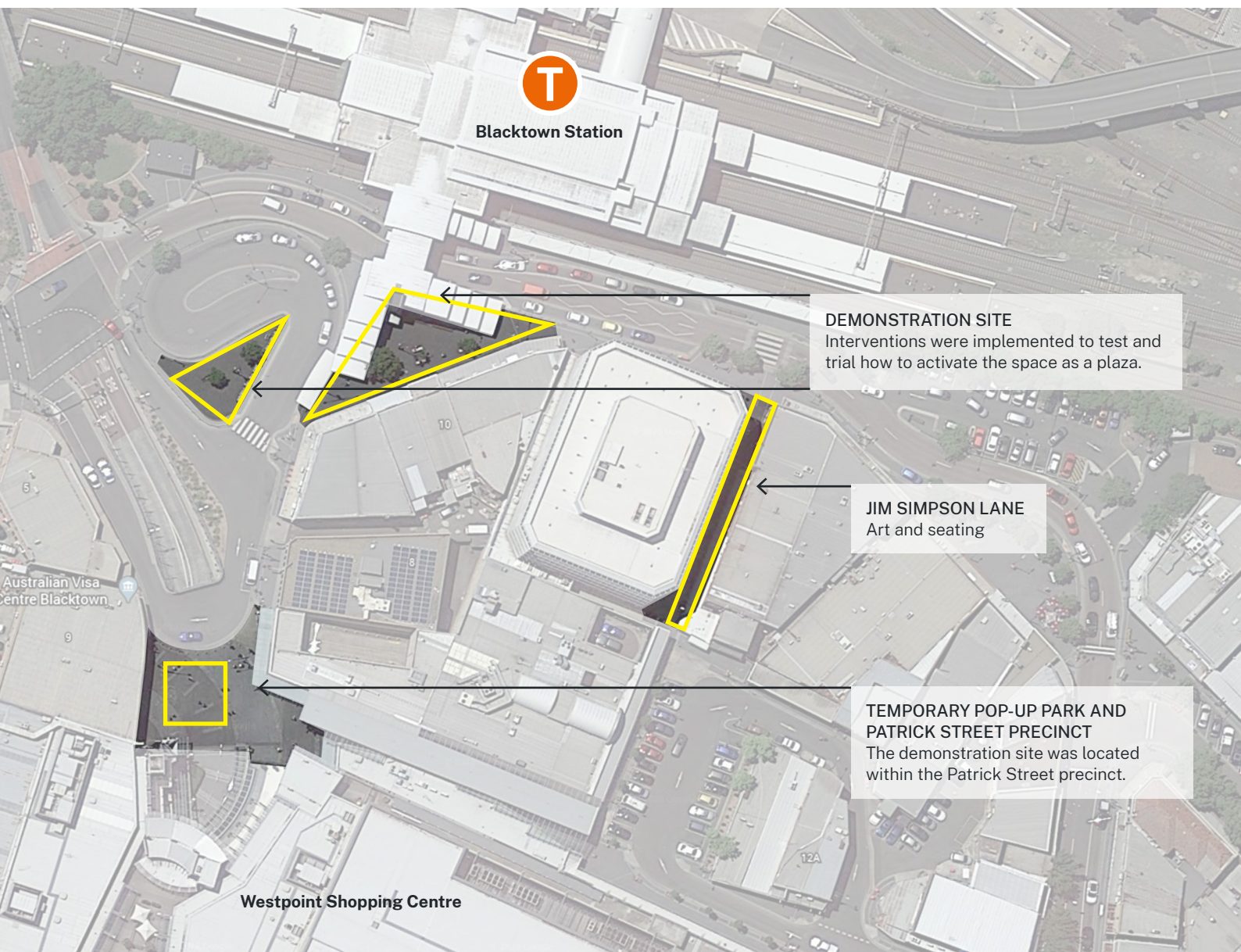
Council engaged the services of a place planning consultancy to develop the Place Identity and the Place Framework, and test placemaking activations.

A section of the Patrick Street precinct was transformed into a temporary pop-up park with planter boxes, seating and shade. Jim Simpson Lane was revitalised with public art and seating and various interventions were implemented in the underutilised public spaces outside of Blacktown train station to test and trial how these spaces could be used as plazas.

Through these interventions, the project improved the amenity of thoroughfares between Blacktown train station and Westpoint Shopping Centre with planter boxes, seating and shade, and created opportunities for community connection in the heart of the city centre.

Project governance

Council's project team delivered this project through a cross-departmental model. Project management and coordination were undertaken by Council's Safer Community team, with input and oversight from other Council units, including Recreation Planning and Design, Economic Development and Property, and Arts and Cultural Development teams. Meetings were held monthly with the NSW Government to review progress, issues and risks.



Project site plan

Community and stakeholder engagement

Council delivered a hybrid engagement program, using online and in-person methods. Innovative engagement activities were carried out to promote the project, capture place identity insights, and test placemaking ideas, helping Council to understand which activations resonated most with the Blacktown community.

This included:

- First Nations engagement with Elders and local community representatives
- Stakeholder engagement including workshops with strategic planners, advisory groups, the arts and cultural sector and service providers
- Interviews with local business owners and key stakeholders
- Online community workshop
- In-person pop-up consultation in Warrick Lane
- Interactive ideas board at Blacktown Library
- Briefings with culturally-diverse community groups
- Online survey and interactive ideas board.

Consultation opportunities were promoted both online and on-site, including via Council's Your Say website, social media, email distribution, as well as on corflute signage and footpath decals.

Pop-up community engagement at the opening of Warrick Lane Town Park. Image courtesy: Blacktown City Council

Engagement outcomes

465+ community members engaged

107 online surveys completed **68** pop-up consultation participants

100+ ideas board contributions **38** local businesses consulted

30+ community services consulted **36** women's night walk participants

30+ internal stakeholders from across 16 council units

A key outcome was the development of the Dharug Country Statement through consultation with Dharug Elders. This engagement played a crucial role in shaping the four identity strengths outlined in the Place Framework guiding principles for future place activations in the city centre:

- Capable and connected
- Diverse and resilient
- Fair and focussed
- Green and open.



“ The Blacktown city centre is at the heart of the most populous city in NSW. Blacktown is one of the most multicultural and fastest growing cities in Australia with a history and heritage representing more than 180 countries.

The Blacktown city centre is itself undergoing enormous growth and transformational change.

There is a great challenge for Council to ensure that we retain public open spaces within the CBD that reflect both the vibrant future and the cultural heritage of Blacktown.

This case study, Heart of Blacktown, demonstrates that these challenges can be met.

The Heart of Blacktown project was a collaboration between Blacktown City Council and the NSW Government through the Places to Love program.

The Heart of Blacktown produced not only a detailed framework and methodology for the temporary use of public open spaces, but also three activations that could be used as a blueprint for the future.



”

Vale Tony Bleasdale OAM

Mayor of Blacktown City Council during the project



Patrick Street temporary parklet. Image courtesy: NSW Government

Evaluation

Council used the Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life (Evaluation Tool). The Evaluation Tool was used throughout the project to document trends in pedestrian activity before and after project implementation.

Evaluation surveys conducted during the initial stages of the project revealed the perception of the Patrick Street precinct as having a commercial and hostile atmosphere.

This changed after the installation of the Patrick Street parklet, where the community responded enthusiastically to the demonstration project, with more people walking through, sitting in and using the thoroughfare. The community feedback expressed a desire for the parklet to become a permanent fixture.

Building on this success, Council replicated similar installations along other high traffic pedestrian routes in Blacktown, including Main Street, using funds from the Streets as Shared Spaces program.



Beats and Bites activation in the Village Green Blacktown.
Image courtesy: Blacktown City Council



Temporary box planters, seating and shade at the Patrick Street parklet created a welcoming thoroughfare and encouraged people to sit and stay. Image courtesy: NSW Government

Timeline

Project

2020

January

Places to Love partnership established

2021

February

Held university student tour

August

Preparation of Place Identity and Place Framework

December

Held women's night walk

2022

May

Delivered Mother's Day event at Patrick Street parklet

June

Held Cube in a Triangle event

Finalised Place Identity and Place Framework

Ongoing

Implementation of Place Identity and Place Framework

Cost breakdown

Description of Activities	Cost
Place Identity and Place Framework	\$100,000
Project execution, monitoring and evaluation	
Engagement and activations	\$50,000
This included:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's night walk • Mother's Day event • Beats and Bites event • Cube in a Triangle art installation • University student tour • Temporary placemaking 	
Approximate total	\$150,000



Thoroughfare between Blacktown train station and Westpoint Shopping Centre.
Image courtesy: NSW Government

Outcomes and lessons learnt

Through the preparation of the Place Identity and the Place Framework, as well as temporary placemaking activations, this project brought to light the community's desire for well-located, vibrant and useful public spaces in the Blacktown city centre.

Places to Love funding provided Council with the opportunity to look beyond business-as-usual and create something uniquely Blacktown. Council, together with community and stakeholders, explored the importance of place identity to understand how identity is changing in Blacktown and how to design urban fabric changes and activities that respond to evolving needs in the community.

Council worked through various challenges, such as COVID-19 public health orders, time constraints and materials/resource shortages, and in doing so, learned that effective placemaking solutions can be delivered at low cost, and are best when tailored to a specific location.

The Heart of Blacktown project provided opportunities to:

- Understand who uses public space and why
- Capture community feedback about the quality of public spaces and ideas for future activations
- Examine women's safety in the city
- Explore opportunities for child-friendly spaces

- Trial different design and engagement approaches
- Work collaboratively across Council
- Deliver low-cost and short-term placemaking solutions, building the case for long-term change.

These learnings will be applied in Council's future public space projects.

What's next?

Council has since purchased the Patrick Street parklet, providing more time to explore placemaking options and build an evidence base.

The Place Identity and Place Framework were endorsed by Council's Executive Management Committee and adopted by Council, agreeing to trial the Place Framework for a two-year period with stronger support for cross-directorate collaboration.

This project has shaped additional placemaking projects with the support of the NSW Government, including Made in Blacktown through the [Streets as Shared Spaces program](#), F.A.M Fest through the [Open Streets program](#), Blacktown Day + Night and the [Safer Cities program](#). The project also informed Council's WestInvest grant applications.

Locals resting at the temporary pop-up parklet outside Westpoint Shopping Centre. Image courtesy: NSW Government



Photo diary


These photographs document the transformation of the project site from Blacktown train station to Westpoint Shopping Centre and at Patrick Street into public space for people to sit and relax within the bustling city centre.



1. **Before** – Patrick Street pedestrian island.
2. **After** – Temporary cube art by artist Ozlum Guccuk and seating outside Blacktown train station with seating.
3. **Before** – Thoroughfare between Blacktown train station and Westpoint Shopping Centre.

4. **After** – Thoroughfare between Blacktown train station and Westpoint Shopping Centre.
5. **Before** – Jim Simpson Lane thoroughfare before.
6. **After** – Ground mural, planters and seating in Jim Simpson Lane after.

Images courtesy: NSW Government.



“ The community engagement that we delivered during Places to Love allowed us to ask who we are as a city, what are our strengths, and what makes Blacktown, Blacktown? ”

Blacktown City Council, Safer Community Coordinator

People sitting in the pop-up parklet.
Image courtesy: NSW Government

NSW Government

Published by NSW Government

Title: Blacktown City Centre
The Heart of Blacktown Place Identity

First published: November 2024
© Crown Copyright 2024 NSW Government

You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the NSW Government as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to charge others for access to the publication (other than at cost); include the publication in advertising or a product for sale; modify the publication; or republish the publication on a website. You may freely link to the publication on a departmental website.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (February 2024) and may not be accurate, current or complete.

This publication recognises the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and makes reference to project outcomes during the 2020-21 period. The State of New South Wales, the author and the publisher take no responsibility, and will accept no liability, for the accuracy, currency, reliability or correctness of any information included in the document (including material provided by third parties). Readers should make their own inquiries and rely on their own advice when making decisions related to material contained in this publication.

Image on front cover:
The Heart of Blacktown
Image courtesy: NSW Government

Resources



For more information,
please visit [Blacktown Council](#)



Visit our website to learn more about the
[Great Places Toolkit](#) or email
Revitalisation@transport.nsw.gov.au